PARTISAN REVIEW

VOLUME II, NO. 9 OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1935

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NEW CONTRIBUTORS: ILYA EHRENBOURG, famous Soviet novelist and essayist, has recently become well known to American readers through the publication here of his novel, *Out of Chaos,* and his contributions to the *New Masses.* . . . ALBERT RAFFI, a twenty-three year old Bostonian, is a member of the Artists and Writers Union of that city. . . . GRACE LUMPKIN'S second novel, *A Sign for Cain,* will be published on October 14th by Lee Furman, Inc. *To Make my Bread,* her first book published in 1932, won the Maxim Gorky Prize for the best proletarian novel of that year. . . . An editorial note precedes the speeches of JOHN STRACHEY, ANDRE GIDE and ANDRE MALRAUX at the Writers Congress in Paris this summer. . . . NELLIE COOMBS, who lives in North Dartmouth, Mass., writes us that her people "have been in this country for a couple of hundred years, the original stock coming from England. My ancestors have been farmers, machinists, sailors and ship's carpenters. I could not afford to go to college, so I got a job in a screw factory, inspecting and packing screws." For the last two years she has been working in the preparing department of the same mill. She is twenty-seven years old. Her story in this issue is her first published work. . . . BETSEY FOOTE was recently arrested in the South End of Boston on a frame-up charge of vagrancy; at present she is the press agent for the New England Labor News Bureau and one of Boston's army of unemployed. She is twenty-one years old, and except for contributions to a college paper she has not published before.

BEGINNING WITH the next issue PARTISAN REVIEW will carry a permanent list of contributing editors, composed of its leading contributors and editorial representatives throughout the country. The incomplete list now at hand contains the names of Samuel Putnam, Meridel Le Sueur, J. S. Balch, Nelson Algren and Richard Wright. . . . The next issue will also carry an announcement of a workers' sketch contest which, in all probability, will be publicized under the general title, *All in a Day's Work.*

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TONIGHT IS PART OF THE STRUGGLE

Meridel Le Sueur

THAT AFTERNOON SHE THOUGHT of the bright half-spring sunshine and people coming from the relief walking slow in the half cold half heat of March. In the afternoon so many men without jobs and the dirty snow on the ground. She had walked slowly along with the men and women, carrying Dave wrapped in a pink blanket and sometimes a woman stopped and lifted down the blanket and looked at the tiny head and said what is his name? She lowered her lids over her thin cheeks, I better not act proud because this is the depression, I haven't a right to have a baby that's what they say, so she would try to look like an old stick, try to seem dry and brittle like old women, try to cover up her thin gold hair and make out like the baby bundle was a sack, some kind of old clothes maybe she had just gotten from the welfare and wrapped it up. But when she turned the corner and the sun blazed down as if lifting her, gee whiz, Jesus Christ it's a baby and she felt the curve of new legs, the weak head falling against her, the pushing mouth . . . but we can't give milk or cream or wheat you better nurse him as long as you can it's the cheapest food anyway, its a law now anyway you have to nurse your baby but with worry the milk goes and you have to be thinking at two o'clock, I've got to have milk, at six o'clock I've got to have milk, at six in the morning, at ten at two at six again I've got to have milk. Drink a lot of water, drink hot tea, that is good, Mrs. Ellgerty says, that is excellent.

If they only had somewhere to go at night, to get out of that awful room with the baby sleeping in a cracker box on the table and no place to go to get away from Jock and nowhere for him to go but out to get drunk if he could.

She had to go through an alley, through an old carriage arch that wasn't ever used now since the old mansion had become a boarding and rooming house and all the occupants on relief. She went up the dirty black alley and into the back door which led directly into their room. It must have been the kitchen of

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the mansion once. It was one room with a gas plate, a brass bed, one rocker and a table. Jock was sitting in his old socks reading the evening paper that he picked up from the next door before they got around to reading it. You couldn't get used to seeing him it gave you a start to see him home at four o'clock and you got mad seeing him sitting there . . . for Christ's sake, Jock, change the baby if you ain't got nothing better to do.

He saw her getting thinner, he saw her breasts, the peak of her dress wet from the watery milk. It made his guts ache. He threw down the paper, he spit on the floor.

She screamed. "Don't you dare spit on the floor when I broke my back cleaning it this morning." The baby started in her arms almost as if still in her. She laid it down as if she had been burned. She laid it on the table with the relief order.

"A fine Mrs. I have," Jock said, "can't get back in time."

"Go sit on your ass," she said and took off her terrible hat so her hair shot around her face. I am pretty, I am pretty, Jesus, Jesus I am pretty. O Jock, look and see! I'm pretty as Joan Crawford. . . . "

She had to get something to eat with him looking at her, hate screwing into her back.

He couldn't go into any room. There wasn't any other room.

Pretty soon he said, "It's snowing, Leah, it's snowing."

She looked at him.

"I see by the papers," he said, "there is going to be a mass meeting."

"A what?" she said.

"A circus, you nut, a mass meeting."

"You might talk as if I'm a lady," she said.

"Oh yeah?" he said, "parading all afternoon like any moll."

"Shut up," she said.

"Are you cooking prunes again, Jesus God, prunes, what do they think we are?"

"Listen," she said, sitting down to nurse the baby, holding out the big white globe of breast. Jesus, he thought, how can a little thing like that have such fine cow's breasts, for a kid, who'd have thought it.

"Listen," she said, "Can't we go somewheres tonight? Every night is just like every other. A girl wants to have a little fun. I don't never have a bit of fun since the baby came."

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"Sure, Madam," he said, "Mrs. Rockefeller, I'll take you to the opera to-night being as how on account of I got a car-token that is just enough to get me down to the relief office tomorrow."

"Tonight is just like every other night," she said, "I got to get outen here. We might take a walk."

"We might take a walk," he said, "in the fine March wind, fine for the brat."

She laid the baby in the cracker box, letting his white fine head down easy off her thin arm. He let his arms wave as if signalling to someone not in the room. It was silent, outside the snow was falling. Somebody began to holler upstairs. She looked at Jock. He sat helpless looking at his hands. You could hear the sour sounds of people scurrying upstairs like lonely rats. The baby kept signalling. You could just see his hands over the side of the box. Outside the snow was falling as if speaking against the window, saying something.

"Do you suppose," Leah said, "that it is snowing everywhere?"

He looked at her, the things women said, how in hell should I know am I supposed to know where it is snowing.

She began to cry softly as if she were alone in the room. It made him nervous. "Listen," he said, "why don't we go to that mass meeting at the auditorium?"

"I don't know what a mass meeting is," she said.

"Well, the auditorium is only one block away and it will be good and warm there and we'll see some people."

"Oh, will there be people there?" she stood up. "Oh look look, Jock, I can wrap him right up, he won't wake up he won't even know and we can take turns carrying him."

"Ok," he said, putting on his three year old coat.

"Listen," she said, "you wear the sweater under the coat, the wind is nippy."

"For Christ's sake shut up, put it on yourself."

While they wrapped up the baby, he mumbled on: "Put on the sweater yourself, that's what I say, that's the trouble with women always telling men what they ought to do, make saps out of 'em."

Outside in the dark alley the snow was falling softly and when they got out on the street being only one block from the auditorium, the hurrying people began to swell around them, caught them up in many powerful streamlets pouring into the

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main street towards the block-long building. The snow made a speed in the air, the people hurrying made another speed, men walking with women, bunches of men hunched over, blowing fiercely and darkly along in the wind together. Jock took her arm and she bent over the baby and they were caught up in a group entering the wide door with the wind blowing against them, all their bodies hunched the same way. They fell inside the building without the wind and as in a bas relief intent faces climbed swiftly up the ramp.

Jock said, "I was here once at a walkathon and it's nuts sitting downstairs, you gotta sit upstairs and then you can see downstairs."

Leah clutched the baby and climbed, it pulled her down in front to carry him. They came out on a giant shell a block long and they sat down on the side and already below was a vast ocean of dark people, and the sides of the shell were filling rapidly, people pouring in swift black rivulets.

They found a seat half way down and she laid Dave on her knees. It was warm, people were all around them. "Jeez," Jock said, "this is going to be a lousy bum show."

"Shut up," Leah said, "it's warm anyhow, so many people make it warm anyway."

Men and women kept coming down the aisles, a heavy woman walked slowly. She was pregnant, her slow feet, searching only for food and shelter, worked hard, broken on the flesh loom of childbed, at stove, at work. Below the dark clothes the veins were burst, erupted like the earth's skin, split by the terrible axe of birth. Leah shuddered. I will get like that. She shifted Dave so his feet dug into her empty stomach. "Sit still," Jock said, "do you want to go?"

A man was talking. She was afraid he would wake Dave but he slept without stirring, his head falling back a little and his mouth open. She didn't listen to the words very much, she looked at men's bodies, they always told her something.

"LISTEN," a man was saying, and she leaned back but his voice kept striking in every part of her. "TONIGHT IS PART OF THE STRUGGLE." He began to tell about things she knew about, how they were hungry, how they could not get jobs, how they must fight together. Jock looked at her and he also knew it was spoken to them. She leaned forward shoulder with Jock to look at the man. He spoke in a very precise speech, was it Scandinavian, Finnish like her father who had been a

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carpenter, very gentle and precise speech. She couldn't see him very well, he must have been half a block away, but his voice coming out of the delicate shell of his body, and the words made her think of the iron range on the Mesaba where she was born.

"Who is he?" she asked and the man next her said, "That's Tiala."

"Tiala?" she said.

The man next her said, "It's snowing fierce outside now. Tiala is the district organiser for the Communist Party."

"Two years ago," he was saying, and the voice came large through the horns and now all the dark bodies were straining forward, "two years ago we had hunger marches, the seed we planted two years ago takes root now." He talked in terms of growing, of yeast in bread, she could understand yeast and seed, it excited her.

"The rank and file," he said, "the masses." She looked down on the great black sea of bodies, heads like black wheat growing in the same soil, the same wind. Something seemed to enter her and congeal. I am part, she wanted to say.

The voice was coming into them. You are producers, wealth is only produced by hand and brain. I am a producer, she thought with her hand on the protruding belly of the baby, but not from hand and brain. She thought she was going to cry and Jock would kick her in the shins and yell at her when they got home. She heard only some of the words, the ones that her body's experience repeated to her, the class struggle, militant workers, the broad masses. They were like words in the first primer, gigantic, meaningless, but she leaned over with the others, to see, to hear, to touch, make real, make the lips form on them.

They no longer thought of going. Something seemed to have broken behind Jock's eyes, some hard thing and he looked frightened and open. It was like when you went home after a long hard trip. She wanted to cry down, "O Tiala, we are hungry, we are lonely, we are lonely and hungry. It's dark, and the snow is falling in March and the night is wide for Jock and me and we might get old without . . . O Tiala . . ."

No one could say a word. They all sat like a great black rock. Then suddenly the man in the platform seemed to ask a question and without warning the great body moved, hands lifted, mouths opened together and rising suddenly, lifted by storm and cataclysm, wind and the earth's eruption, the black

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body rose, lifted high, a black tide crest of hands, faces, shoulders, like erupted tree roots, black labor root erupted, rising block tide of labor bodies in a thick volcanic tide and there was a roar of flesh, roar of hands of a high key like a body of water on cliff sides, then, from man throat, from rocky Adam's apple, from chests deep with lifting, building, riveting there rose a terrible, a great manroar . . .

AYE. AYE. AYE

The new flesh between her hands jerked as if lassoed, the breath caught in the thin ribs, the baby's face got red as when he was born, the nostrils shot open as if the noisy air was too much to breathe. At the last AYE, it lifted its head, struggled and let out a bawl of rebellion, wonder, amazement and the young body cry topped the others, and faces turned seeing the pink blanket and there was a great laughter as they saw the tiny white head as Leah had lifted it from the chocking and held it on her shoulder, the tiny white head like a dandelion top in spring sprouting there amongst the black froth of men from the tool and dye, carpenters' unions, truck drivers, tobacco workers, stock yard workers, and there the dandelion-top new bright head as if just emerged and Leah hid her face behind Jock's shoulder and he wriggled trying to show it wasn't him and then he laughed and his ears were red and he put his big hand that was good on the Ford factory belt on the bright tiny head and his eyes said Leah, like when he wooed her.

The speaker was saying then, ". . . so Monday you must all be down to march to the capital to demand security for the workers. Bring your children . . . "

She and Jock looked at each other. They had something to do now for Monday. She felt close packed with the others as if they were all running forward together. Outside the snow was falling in the heavy March darkness and the thick mass would move and spread, explode like black projectiles from their strength . . .

And the speaker lifted his right hand straight up and he said in a loud precise and clear voice and she felt the strong taut thigh of Jock tensing next her and saw his knuckles white on his clenched fist . . . Jock without looking at her took her hand in a hard grip . . . "LISTEN," Tiala was saying, "FELLOW WORKERS, REMEMBER, DON'T FORGET. EVERY HOUR, EVERY NIGHT AND TONIGHT IS PART OF THE STRUGGLE."

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IMAGES OF POVERTY

1: Camera in 9th Ave.

The derelict who groaned in the dry gutter;
signs stamped on the eyes: unbearable afternoon.

Those heaps of plaster in the condemned house,
where the evicted slept last week; the nailed doors.

Or the barber drowsing with flies on his lids;
or the grills where the dried beer decays.

Beams of the tenement famous for 20 burned; left
in charcoal like the jointed bones of the lynched.

Voracious eye, stay, stay to see
in a steep hall boys standing with
the strengthening finger of their fresh sex,
eager,—(the word chalked on the shoddy wall)—
how some will smile toward the old syphilitic.

Dust, iron, shouts, ethereal exhausts.

The cardiac baby cries on the highest floor;
the relief potatoes boiled and blue
served on oilcloth; and the blue milk, rocking.

The rocking L; and the long cripple
vendor of lemons from white bag; and the sunburned drunk
head yelling, hands forward, adrift in the L's
regular shadows, cursing a life locked
in bars of the enraging sun.

The crowds twisting over the maimed cement;
the unemployed with bars of the L in their eyes.

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2: The Subway

Sleep on the way home, 6 P. M., and each one shaken to a stifled flat. Sleep. The ads murmur: buy me, buy me. Hands hanging in a net of veins; the sweated collar; feet unseen; heart sodden with a full week's overtime. Heavy, hungry. Light scuds on the concrete. Our sleep is shaken like the shadow of vibrating chain. Another hour toward another hour, another hour toward

Where. We're stopped. Who? Blue bulb steady in the tunnel. Wake up, we're nowhere. Is it the end? What's up? Is the lottery over? A girl stands staring from her nickel sleep. Nowhere. Who is it? The bright walls still. Ask someone. Who jumped or fell underneath the

Two cigarettes for lunch. The suitcase remained on the platform. Those were the last of the pack. Found crumpled. He jumped here. Delay of ten minues. Won't we go on? The split arm and the mouthful of brain. Don't look. Don't crowd. Don't jump.

There's no room for all. Who'll ask to be first? The fouled? the woman with the secret growth? the punchdrunk? the disqualified? Shall we brake the trains with corpses? We've learned in boyhood the routine of sorrow; losers mostly; heads harsh inside with worry. Consider: if all jumped who remember the distrust of affection, the morning when we were laid off, the broken cup of gin, or the feverish child in the darkness; if each who bites the internal knuckle of misfortune,—consider!—, shall all jump? Shall we stop

These tunnels with suicide, sour the automatic draft with blood, neglect rails wrinkled and the cities stopped? These are our halls; courage; we spin the world. The first majority of mankind, only a few we dare excuse to die. Our vigor rushes deeper than these pits.

Anew! Ugly, shaking with dialectic, the train plunges our metal force.

David Wolff

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THE SURREALISTS

Ilya Ehrenbourg

In an old Charlie Chaplin film there is a picturesque if somewhat unappetizing incident. The hero enters a restaurant and orders fowl. He is no ordinary glutton, but the daintiest of epicures, and he likes his bird only when it is decidedly "high." He accordingly goes out into the kitchen to see to it that the pheasant is sufficiently tainted. For connoisseurs of his sort, it is customary to hang the fowl up by the neck. When the neck rots off and the bird drops to the floor, the pheasant is ready to be put into the oven. The chef and his assistants are forced to hold their noses; even their sense of professional duty is not strong enough to enable them to overcome their repugnance. Not so the delighted gourmet; he inhales the spoiled meat odor as greedily as if it came from a cluster of lilies of the valley.

I am not quite sure as to whether the Parisian "Surrealists" are to be compared to the pheasant strung up by the neck or to the wily chef. I am not sure as to whether they are mentally sick or merely very clever, these young fellows who make a trade of insanity. One thing is certain, they have a following of connoisseurs, and well to do ones at that: a copy of a poem by René Crevel* on "Imperial Japan" paper sells for three hundred francs, while the work of another poet, Péret, brings five hundred francs the copy.

The Surrealist magazine is provided with a phosphorescent wrapper that glows in the dark. It would be hard, certainly, to explain just why the publication must appear in this format, just as it would be to demonstrate that a rotten pheasant is any more savory than a fresh one. It may be a matter of taste, but it is at the same time material for the psychiatrist. These young fellows call themselves Surrealists, that is to say, the devotees

*TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—In justice to Crevel, a justice which Ehrenbourg himself would be the first to want to see done, it must by all means be pointed out that this article was written in 1933. The author of *Mon corps et moi* afterward came through beautifully, to take his manly stand beside Aragon and Malraux as a proletarian revolutionist in the true sense of the word. At the recent Paris Congress, he made an admirable address, and on the preceding May 1, he had spoken before an audience of workers who had been deeply stirred by his words. His death shortly after the Congress came as a great shock to his comrades and is still fresh in mind. Knowing that he was doomed by cancer, he had worked feverishly to the very last for the cause. Poems on "Imperial Japan" were a thing of the past with him.

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of a super-real world; and it may very well be that they feel more at home in such a world as that. Who knows? After a rotten pheasant, the soul may yearn for a phosphorescent wrapper?

The publication which appears in this weird wrapper is entitled *Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution;* for the Parisian snobs are very fond of the "revolution," as they are of cocktails and sexual perversions. The Surrealists are careful to quote Hegel, Marx and Lenin, and to assure their unsuspecting readers that they are "serving the revolution" by their efforts; indeed, to hear them tell it, they are the only ones who are serving the revolution. Preoccupied with theories of masturbation and exhibitionist philosophies, these phosphorescent youths would make themselves out to be implacable revolutionary zealots and the champions of a proletarian purity.

André Gide stood up in a Communist meeting, and all who listened attentively to what he had to say were at once aware that here was a writer with some manhood speaking. The Surrealists, however, were annoyed with André Gide; he was not revolutionary enough to suit them; and the poet, Péret,—the same one whose book on "Imperial Japan" paper costs five hundred francs,—proceeded to write, in Gide's honor, a set of verses of the sort that small boys commonly scrawl up on the urinals of Paris. I quote a few of the more respectable lines from this quite unprintable production:

They say, Comrade Gide,
That you are going
To run out your belly
As a red flag.
Yes, Comrade Gide, you shall have
The hammer and the sickle:
The sickle in the belly,
And the hammer down your throat!

The phosphorescent rowdies are displeased with the Soviet Union. One of them writes: "The wind of cretinism blows from the U.S.S.R." What is the meaning of this pompous, solemn assertion, with reference to "cretinism"? It means, simply, that these young "revolutionists" will have nothing to do with work. They go in for Hegel and Marx and the revolution, but work is something to which they are not adapted. They are too busy studying pederasty and dreams. They wonder, irritatedly, "how anyone can go into raptures over the manufacture of saucepans?" For they, needless to state, are not in a position to manufacture anything. Their time is taken up with spending their inheritances or their wives' dowries; and they have, moreover, a devoted following of rich Amrican idlers and hangers-on. They are put out with the Soviet Union, for the

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reason that people work there; and this, to their minds, is the "wind of cretinism."

The same freak who was disturbed by the "wind" is quite frank in confessing: "What revolted me more than anything else was their 'Road to Life'. I was angered at the sight of these young . . . " (there follows an unprintable word) "for whom work was life's one goal, its one meaning, whose general style was that of a street-car conductor, and who, upon going into a brothel, where at least there are bodies and a song, can think of nothing better to do than to throw themselves on the women in a screaming rage and tear down those flaming words, which I would gladly give them as a program: 'Eat, sing and make love to the girls'."

Their own program, in any event, is clear: they first read Marx, then hang out the sign of a bawdy-house. They have a contempt for the manufacture of saucepans and such like utilitarian pursuits. What difference does it make to them, in what sort of pan the cook prepares their putrid roast? What interests them is drinking, singing and making love to the girls. This may be, for them, a sufficiently comprehensive program, but there is nothing particularly super-realistic about it. Tens of thousands of young fellows of the well-to-do-class divert themselves in the same fashion. But these phosphorescent young men are more ambitious. They are incessantly seeking to stir up a scandal which will get them talked about at every turn.

What is it they do, these unrecognized geniuses and noisy revolutionists? What is there for them to do? Well, they might at least get out and demonstrate with the unemployed. But the police are in the habit of dispersing the unemployed, and the police carry rubber billies. That is unpleasant—the whole performance is lacking in luster; who ever talks about the unemployed? For revolution, to them, means nothing more or less than a chance for self-advertisement. They began with noncommittal statement. They took pains to cram their publications with the spoken rather than the printed terms for the various portions of the human anatomy. The French police, however, are extremely liberal in the matter of obscenity, and it never occurred to anyone to confiscate a phosphoescent pornography of this sort. And so, from terminology the Surrealists went on to philosophy.

They are naive enough to admit that their program is, "to make love to the girls"; but they are shrewd enough to realize that they cannot go very far on this road. Women for them are merely an opportunistic concession. They have another program to unfold, consisting of onanism, pederasty, fetishism, exhibitionism, and even bestiality. But in Paris, these things are scarcely so much as noticed. It is here that reality gets the better of their super-realism, helped out by a little badly digested Freud,

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and the veil of a double mystery is cast over everyday perversions. This is one case where stupidity is an asset. It is likely that, among the Surrealists, there are some who are in fact mentaly deranged; but there are hospitals for such as these. The majority of them merely feign psychic sickness as the one mark of genius in the current calendar year. As for the "style" that goes best with their vanity and egotism, it is not a conductor's uniform, but a straight-jacket.

One of this merry crew turns his attention to Surrealist painting on glass. He begins with mathematical formulas, following which he gives us this profound observation: "They are wrapped in the depths of their own sorrow, to which a mirror must be held up, in order that they may pass over into onanistic hallucinations."

Another works at Sadism, and writes an article entitled *The Contemporaneousness of Sade.* According to him, we are all sadists: "Do we find, upon an examination of conscience, that we belong to that small number of individuals who are free of what science technically terms vice? But those who today are free of vice may tomorrow develop the symptoms of it."

A third depicts a whole collection of meaningless articles, looking more like a heap of cow-dung than anything else, and adds the caption: "New psycho-atmospheric-anamorphous objects."

A fourth writes a long article on his preferences in oil-paints: "I should have liked to devote myself to painting; but my friends noticed that I invariably played with the colors. I would press on the tube, let the color ooze out and smear it on. . . . This soon became a passion with me. Upon lying down to sleep, I would take the tubes and smell them . . . I was conscious of a strong desire to eat the paints. I was especially excited by cadmium yellow, cobalt and cinnabar. . . . " From perusing Surrealist works, the tube-lover hit upon a deep-lying explanation for his hobby. "The fact," he says, "that I would proudly display, to each and every one I met, even in the streets of Paris, a couple of large tubes may be taken as indicating that I was given to symbolistic exhibitionism."

These pheasants are surely rotten enough for anyone's taste. Surrealism's one concern is in finding ways for young French poets to amuse themselves in these far from tranquil days through which we are passing. Among those poets, we find the names of some, such as André Breton and Paul Eluard, who a few years back were writing truly contemporary verse. An interest in the tinsmith's work impresses them as being beneath the dignity of a poet. They are unable to understand that, to Soviet poets, those "saucepans" are simply one of the material phases of a people's mighty effort, which, like any other great passion, cannot leave the poet's heart untouched.

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The Surrealists despise mere plodding prose. They have time on their hands and many cocktails to consume. They likewise have plenty of Imperial Japan paper. And so, they hold symposiums for the "irrational penetration of the nature of objects."

Symposium No. 1 has to do with the glass globule. Here are the questions:

"Is the globule conducive to love?

"Of which sex is it?

"To what philosophic system is it related?

"In what part of the feminine body would you place it?

"Supposing the woman were dead?

"To what crime does it correspond?"

Breton asserts that the globule is of the feminine sex, while Eluard insists that it is masculine. The globule is conducive to love. As for the philosophers, there is a free-for-all of Hegel, Nostradamus, Kant, Heraclitus, each attempting to outdo the other in cleverness. They agree upon placing the globule in the shameful parts, irrespective of whether the individual is alive or dead. And finally, the globule corresponds to any number of crimes, from pocket-picking to vampirism.

After the gobule, the poets turn their attention to the scrap of velvet. The questions:

"What language does velvet speak?

"What is its profession?

"To what perversion does it correspond?"

Upon due reflection, the poets come to the conclusion that velvet is polyglot. One maintains that it speaks Celtic, another, that its tongue is Bulgarian. There is violent disagreement as to its profession, with talk of prostitution, the manufacture of spirits, pimping, martyrdom, secretarial functions, and what not. At any rate, the Surrealists, who are experts on the subject, are satisfied that it tends to represent the sum total of perversions.

This scientific activity keeps up, and poets may be heard inquiring of one another, in all seriousness: "What portion of the map of Denmark would you prefer for purposes of masturbation?" From geography, they go on to history, pulling figures out of their hats. Going back to the year 409 of our era, they begin by considering what life was like in that year. For example, how many inhabitants did Paris have? And the answer is: one-thousand-eight-hundred-fifty-seven. Some one disagrees: there were, all in all, but three inhabitants. Then, returning to their favorite problem: "How did one approach a woman in the year 409?" Opinions differ. A Surrealist somewhat lacking in imagination replies: "One opened an umbrella and said, 'Madam, it is going to rain'." Another, more heroic

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soul has a different view of things: "They tossed them up in the air, then cockered them under the arms."

Regarding such exercises, the Surrealists say: "Our symposiums are conducted with the maximum of seriousness and without any thought of publicity." Nevertheless, it is plain to be seen, they always manage to attract attention to themselves one way or another. Can it be that they have succeeded in muddling their own minds with all those paint-tubes and globules of theirs? No, they are perfectly aware of what they are after—they propose to be the tainted pheasants for the connoisseurs of preciosity, and each one does his best in this regard. Paris is a large city, with a multiplicity of occupations; and if even a scrap of velvet has a profession, surely there is one for posturing poets.

In the face of all this, they have the nerve to call the rag they publish *Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution.* So, you didn't know what it was they were up to, with all that talk of glass globules? Well, well, so it is the revolution they are serving, is it? The Surrealists realize that it is getting harder every day to "shock the bourgeoisie." You can't live on paint-tubes and velvet. Accordingly, they interlard their exercises with quotations from Lenin. But the bourgeois is not so simple-minded as all that. He knows that these phosphorescent pheasants are not dangerous. As for the workers, they do not read poems on Japanese paper and magazines that come in outlandish covers; but if their eyes should happen to light on these publications, with their smut and their slurs on labor, they would not be able to conceive of "service to the revolution" being associated with such ordinary street hooliganism.

From Arthur Rimbaud, who wrote inspired poems and who fought for the Commune, to these pitiful degenerates, capable only of triflings, is a period of sixty years, representing the lifetime of an entire class and the outcome of a great culture.

Translated from the Russian by SAMUEL PUTNAM

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MEN ON THE BOSTON COMMON

Brass bands for the dead,
wreaths, taps and solemn words.

Flat a few notes for these living, buddies, a few wreaths, a speech or two for these other unknown soldiers, blurted from a cannon's mouth in warfare even bloodier than yours.

The dead are remembered:
once a year their souls are lodged in peace.

Buddies, a brass band for the living shells you stumble over, crumpled on the grass: they lost their breath: honorably discharged, declared unfit for life, they keep the home fires burning in dug out trunks of trees; their bonus is a bench, a bowl of soup their croix de guerre, the cop's tattooing club salutes them.

Play taps as though you meant it,
drop a tear or two, and maybe a dime.

. . . . . .

Mr. Frothingham Lowell, patriot, defender of the faith, husband and lover of the D. A. R., rolls past in a Packard twelve:
Look this way, Mr. Lowell (teeth hard upon your tongue) O look upon your handiwork, and smile.
Their souls are held together with a safety-pin, their bodies ripped wide open with a cough; pretending to be human, they persist in wanting food.
Dig graves, your honor, for these men;
they desecrate your hallowed ground:
shove their rotting bodies deep
beneath this earth where once your fathers fought
for freedom and for gentlemen to come.
Your excellency, unbend your frosty nose; and as you love your commonwealth, show these beggars who you are: call out your rubber cops, enact the Boston Massacre once more, redeem the revolution's fountain-head, and make the Common safe for bankers and their sons.

Brass bands for the heroic dead,
statues, monuments and shrines.

ALBERT RAFFI

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TRIAL BY FIRE

Grace Lumpkin

DUBIE SHOOK DOWN THE ASHES in the stove very carefully because Mister Anderson must not be waked. The ashes were not of much consequence. They were dead and could do no harm. He took a newspaper from the wood-box and stuffed it into the opening of the stove. His small black hands—he was two months less than nine years old—selected the fattest kindling from under the newspapers and laid the pieces crossways in the stove. He sat back on his heels and his black face stared into the black opening where the fire was laid ready for the match.

It was this moment which paralyzed him each morning since the Superintendent of the Detention Home had forced him to make the fires. He felt stiff like one of the hickory logs, with no arms and legs separate. At times he could almost feel the rigid grain of the wood in himself as part of his own body. The rigid grain which seemed to be part of him held him stiff like an upright log. Recently he had begun to think of people and wood as inseparable because they could burn together.

He sat back on his heels waiting with the match in his hand. His eyes were closed and his sensitive thick lips were pressed together. But closed eyes, even when he went to bed at night in the dormitory with the other boys on cots near him, did not bring quiet darkness. Behind his closed lids he forever saw the flames he had seen in the school-house.

Clissy, his sister, who was ten years old, went to school in the room above his own in the old two-story wooden school building. Each morning they said good-bye to their mother, who washed clothes for the white people in the part of town where they had brick school-houses, and reached the school. There Clissy left him in the hall and went up the wide stairs to her class-room.

Toward the middle of the morning when they were having reading class and reading out loud from the primer about the Three Goats Billy—"Where are you going?" asked the Troll.

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"I am going to the other side of the river to eat grass and grow fat," said the First Goat Billy. That day while they were reading the fire bell clanged through the school-house. About once every school year there was a fire drill and the bell clanged upstairs and down. The teachers, smiling knowingly and unafraid, gave the order for the children to stand up and they marched out in orderly rows, unhurried, as they did for recess. That day when the clanging bell interrupted the story of the Three Goats Billy a surprised look appeared on the teacher's face, but it changed immediately to the smile as if she were laughing inwardly at a secret joke, and she gave the order for them to rise. As they stood beside their desks the door opend as if a hard wind had blown it in. Someone hissed excitedly to the teacher, "Fire! Fire!" and ran on.

Dubie's teacher said, "March!"

In the hall, along one whole side of the building there were flames. The sound of crackling wood and flames hissing and gasping for joy, or it seemed joy, the smell of burning rotten wood,—these things were in the hall. The flames were like a mid-summer sun that had come too near and broken up into a hundred licking rays. They licked up the banisters of the wide stairs so that the children on the first floor, marching out, pressed against the outer wall that was still intact and cool. The teachers said, "Left, right,—left, right," quickly, hurriedly, marking time with fingers that trembled.

Dubie marched with the other small black and brown children of his class hugging the wall, making his feet stamp, his eyes wide and white like theirs staring toward the white space down the long hall which was a door into the air outside.

The teacher halted them to wait until two classes, pressed four abreast, squeezed through the door. When they stopped Dubie remembered Clissy as if someone had called out her name in a loud voice. He looked toward the upper floor. While he looked a long shriek split through the sound of the flames. The teacher said, "March! March!" in a high piercing voice. Pressed against the wall, Dubie stared up toward the place from which the first cry and others like it came. The fire licked greedily up the stairs consuming the wood. The other children marched past Dubie who was flat against the wall, almost a part of it. He was staring at the children from the class-rooms upstairs who were half way down the stairs just on the other side of the flames. He could see their black faces and staring white eyes.

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Through the red and orange flames which licked up and down and held the children back he saw them pressed together. They pushed backward against those behind them, their necks and faces strained away from the fire. Their bodies could not move because there were innumerable other bodies clear up the stairs and in the upper hall pressing forward. Some of the children had their hands raised as if a teacher had asked a question and they were anxious to answer.

Dubie could not make out Clissy's face or her voice for the flames hissed and the wood crashed and he could not see any face clearly, and when the wood crashed no particular voice split through the gasping sound of the fire.

One of the children at the end of the line took Dubie's hand and dragged at it, trying to urge him along with the line. Hugging the wall with his body he pulled his hand away, and as the last line went beyond him he left the wall and turning toward the stairs called out "Clissy!" Flames came from the side wall on the stairs and met those which were eating up the steps. Dubie saw the faces through the fire, he saw the flames eat up the faces as they had eaten up the stairs. The stairs crashed down taking the faces with them into the red mouth of the fire.

A rough arm snatched Dubie around the waist and holding him up and away from the fire carried him into the air. They did not find Clissy or the hundred or so other children and teachers who had been on the second floor.

At night in the three-room house in which he and his mother lived Dubie woke up two, sometimes three times. He would be waked by a sound of hissing or gasping, or it would be a single very sharp cry. When he waked in the dark everything would be quiet and still, but he must get up and slip into the kitchen where his mother had made a fire in the cook-stove that morning. He must reach out his finger and touch the stove to be sure it was really cold.

In the day, in the churches where school was being held because the school house was burned to the ground, Dubie sat far back away from the large stove. One Friday morning the teacher said, "Dubie and Rand must make the fires next week." On Monday Dubie started to school with his books. He did not turn up the street toward the church, but walked slowly to the edge of town and out into the country. He could not have

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explained to anyone why he did this any more than he could have explained why he waked in the night.

Except for the pine trees all the country was brown, but the day was sunny, a very still winter day. Dubie sat on a rock and played mumble-peg with his ten-cent store knife. Later he found an ant hill and watched the insects pulling and straining to get a dead fly into their hole. One of the ants found the fly and ran to tell the others. They came back with him, some of them, and while half pushed at the fly others pulled. Two who seemed to be superintending the work ran toward the ant hole and back, urging the others forward. They even ran over the fly while the others were moving it. Dubie wondered if his ears were big enough, if it would be possible for him to hear their voices. At the ant hole other ants were busy coming up or going down into the dark small place. At times one of them would meet another outside. Their noses or whatever they had at their heads would touch as if they were speaking and again they would hurry on, busy and unconcerned with the great giant who was the small black boy squatting above them.

When he thought by the position of the sun and by the feeling of hunger in him that it was time for school to let out Dubie went home. His mother said, "You're back early," and looked at him as if she had questions in her mind.

The next day Dubie stayed in town. He wandered through the business district and then back into the place where he and his own kind lived. From behind a fence on a little rise in the ground he looked through the windows of the church. The children were still there. He could see their heads and shoulders through the windows. The walking had tired him so he sat down behind the fence and played mumble-peg again until the children's voices came across to the little rise and he knew they were going home.

Later that afternoon when he came in from the store after getting octagon soap for his mother she said, "Your teacher was here. She thought you were sick. She says you havn't been to school."

"White folks children go to school every day," she said, "they want learnin'. Don't you want learnin'? You think I've got to whup you?"

She sent him off early the next morning. He stood in the door of the church. The great stove was at the end of the aisle. He looked at the church, made of wood, and craned his neck

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toward the steeple which could leap in one flame up to the very sky. Slowly he turned around from the door and went out into the town. Without explaining or thinking it out to himself, he knew that he could not go home. He walked out into the country and in the late afternoon returned not to his home but to the business section of town. He was hungry and his hunger made him angry, so that wanted to cry. At some place where there was a restaurant a smell of food cooking came up through the basement grating. He stood over the grating, but the smell did not fill his belly. A bakery wagon stood before the restaurant. He walked over to inspect it. The doors at the back were open as the driver had left them when he went inside the restaurant. At the bottom of the wagon, right at the end there was a wooden box and in the box were several pies. Very naturally as if the pies had been placed there for him, Dubie reached in and took one of them.

Someone told the wagon driver and before Dubie was very far down the street a hand took hold of his shirt at the back. Very soon there was a policeman on the other side of him. In a few days he was sent to the Detention Home for truancy and stealing.

Mister Anderson, a tall white man with brown moustaches and a revolver in a holster at his waist was Superintendent of the Detention Home. Dubie had been there a month when Mister Anderson told him it was his duty to get up at five o'clock and make the fires. One fire in the stove in Mister Anderson's cottage; one fire in the stove of the kitchen for the cook; one fire in the stove of the factory work room where the boys made baskets and chairs for a firm in the city.

Dubie was afraid of Mister Anderson, who had a great mouth from which came roars of anger. When he opened his mouth to roar it was possible to see his red tongue and the pale falseness of the roof of his mouth and the gums made by a dentist. His row of white false teeth above showed under his brown moustache, and below as his lips spread out could be seen brown teeth, worn down, and a wad of chewing tobacco. The row of white even teeth above seemed particularly frightening in comparison with the brown teeth below. Another frightening thing was the strap which Mister Anderson often used on the backs of the boys in the home.

It was used on Dubie's back when he said to Mister Anderson, "I can't make no fires."

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"Why can't you?" Mister Anderson demanded.

"I don't know how," Dubie told him.

The strap came down on Dubie's back, which had been stripped of clothes, thirty times. Mister Anderson counted them slowly. "One—two . . . " At the end of ten he said, "Had enough? You going to be impudent. You going to make those fires?"

Dubie, who was eight years old and small for his age, was crying. He tried to explain as far as he could, as far as he understood why he could not make fires, but only blubbered.

At the end of the next ten Mister Anderson asked the question again, and the same thing happened. At the end of the third ten Dubie promised to make fires.

The following morning he crept around to all the stoves putting the sticks in gently because every movement of his arms made each one of the deep welts on his back, which had bled the night before on his blanket, feel as if the strap was coming down on his back again. He shut his eyes when the flame of the match touched the paper, but it was possible to hear the flames that roared up from the kindling, and when he heard them his whole body trembled. He did not look as he put in the hickory logs. As soon as possible after the fire burned in each stove he pushed the door shut and ran away.

It was the fourth morning after Dubie began making the fires that he squatted before Mister Anderson's stove in Mister Anderson's cottage, in the same position in which he had sat that day in the country over the ant hill. His back was still sore, but the welts did not hurt if he moved his hands carefully from the elbows. It was the fourth morning, but instead of becoming accustomed to the fires, he dreaded them more each day.

The match was in his hand ready to be struck against the stove and applied to the paper and kindling. From the next room which was a bed-room he heard a deep snort which was Mister Anderson snoring. This sound was like a command, as if Mister Anderson had said, "Hurry up. Light that fire."

Suddenly, while he was holding the match, the thought came to Dubie that he need not strike it and light the fire. That he need not have another beating. The Detention Home was in the country. He could go back to the building, get his coat, say goodbye,—for some reason he felt it necessary to say goodbye to the other boys,—and walk out on the road. The thought made him feel very foolish and happy and he almost laughed out

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loud. It was so very simple and he was astonished that he had not thought of doing this before.

Dubie put the match carefully back into the box, rose and tip-toed out of the room. Outside, in the air, he walked with a dignified step up the slope and across the yard to the large wooden building. There was no hurried feeling in him. He felt relaxed and joyful, not wooden and paralyzed as he had felt before.

The guard at the door who had waked him half an hour earlier nodded sleepily. Dubit went up to the dormitory and taking a red handkerchief his mother had given him—it had belonged to his father—laid his mouth organ, his tooth brush which had been given him at school and which his mother had insisted on sending with him, and a few other possessions in it. The rising bell had not rung, but some of the boys were awake.

Dubie walked to those who were awake and said gravely, "I'm going home. Goodbye."

With a grave solemn gesture he tucked the handkerchief tied up, under his arm. He went to all the boys who were awake and said gravely, "Goodbye."

They stared at him.

He walked out of the door. The guard in his chair snorted, jerked up his head, looked at Dubie and went back to sleep again.

The cook was the first to notify Mister Anderson that Dubie was gone. He found no fire built in the kitchen stove and began asking questions.

"I don't know," the boys answered Mister Anderson. The one who was a trusty told Mister Anderson in the hall, "He said he was goin' home."

Mister Anderson took one of the guards and hurried down the road. By this time Dubie had been on the road for more than twenty minutes. He saw the open country before him and it made him feel that he wanted to laugh. It was so easy and simple. There was the fresh morning, and the fresh road before him. The road was taking him away from the white man, Mister Anderson, who held the strap and wore a revolver and opened his red mouth to shout. The stove was behind, and the fires which made him see Clissy with the other children through the flames, the black faces that had gone down into the open mouth of the fire.

Dubie walked on even when he heard Mister Anderson be-

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hind him. Some distance back of him, up the road the Superintendent shouted, "Come back here, nigger."

It did not occur to Dubie to turn back, even to turn his head. He went on, walking in the dignified way in which he had begun. But when the men's long legs brought them nearer behind him and he heard the voices closer his feet took longer steps.

Mister Anderson called out, "If you don't stop I'll shoot." Dubie did not turn his head, but his feet of which he was not thinking began to pick themselves up faster until they moved very swiftly. He did not say to himself, "I must hurry, I must get away fast." His feet answered some excitement in him which was begun by the sound of the shout behind and they took him down the road fast until he was panting for breath.

He heard the first shot which went over his head and clipped the limb of a tree that spread above the road. The second shot he did not hear because before the sound of it, which carried something-of-a-second slower than the bullet, reached him, the bullet had gone into Dubie's head and he lay in the dirt without hearing anything.

The red handkerchief tied around his possessions, fallen from under his arm, sat upright in the center of the road.

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AMERICAN OBITUARY

Nelson Algren

The highways of America are white with summer now, and through the dust go the homeless. Till one thinks of America as a long dust road leading to nowhere. The road curves by the wharves of New Orleans, where merchant ships wait high in dry-dock; past the freight yards in Council Bluffs, where the box-cars rot on the sidings. This is America, the vast heart of her, with grey boy-faces pressed to the cold blue bars.

On Madison street in Chicago the boys stand on corners, waiting.

Down at the morgue I saw Frank Mears, address unknown, lying on his back with his eyes still wide and his belly still blue from the water. The ticket on the box said, Frank J. Mears, no address, cause unknown. This is the American thing, the unknown death in the heat of midday, and the country boy in the long ice-box.

Say this is how it happened; say this is how it was.

Frank Mears turned south down Dearborn Street, and no face turned to follow. He went into a tavern where music was, and he'd been drinking four straight days. He banged on a table till they threw him out, and he walked back south down Dearborn. On Harrison street he stood and swayed: a dollar bill was all he possessed, and he waved it like a flag. Two lean men saw him doing that, and when he walked on they followed. Frank Mears turned into a dime burlesque, and he watched till they threw him out.

Frank Mears, no address, slugged for ninety cents.

The lean one said, "Let me help you, friend," and Frank Mears leaned on his arm. The other one said, "This way, kid," and Frank Mears followed, swaying.

American youth, as a boy you sat on a barrel in front of the general store in Sangamon county, watching the farm-carts coming into town. Dust rose uneasily from between their wheels,

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and the country dogs lay in the sun. Between Hurricane Creek and the slow-winding Sangamon there was a kind of tumultuous, rough-and-tumble wildness about the Illinois prairie that all the railroads had not tamed. It was still a vast and sprawling country of shaggy hills and undammed creeks and half-cleared forests. In the moment before the dark came down, Frank Mears, you remembered these farm carts coming into town. You saw the slow dust rising from between their wheels.

You didn't know, that morning when you caught a slow freight through Sangamon county, Frank Mears. When you got into Springfield you gaped at Lincoln's tomb a while, and then you got on toward Chicago.

Frank Mears, unemployed by civilization, age 22 perhaps. Perhaps 25. And whether you came from Council Bluffs, from Sangamon county or from East St. Louis, you still wouldn't have gotten drunk one day if you'd had a day's work to do.

So cover up the box. Beside the low siloes on prairie farms, below the tipples of mines long abandoned or above zinc smelters silent now in the valleys, red cedar and black tamarack wait, creeping to claim back their own. Though Sangamon county has been laced with long steel rails the prairie still plunges, like a wild horse with outstruck hooves, across the planned ties and over the planned Sears-Roebuck fences, past the low siloes, through the Indian corn, across the fields and the farms and the mines and the factories between Hurricane Creek and the slow Sangamon. America is a long dust-road. Frank Mears sways in the sun.

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THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF WRITERS FOR THE DEFENCE OF CULTURE

The first international Congress of Writers for the defence of culture, was held in Paris, 21st-25th of June, 1935. Writers of varying political beliefs and literary opinions—including such diverse figures as Julien Benda, Heinrich Mann, Aldous Huxley, Waldo Frank and Louis Aragon—found a common basis for action in the conviction that the defence of culture necessitates the organization of intellectuals the world over against war and fascism. All realized that Western culture may not survive another world war, and that the growth of fascism is the immediate source of the war danger. The large Soviet delegation impressed upon the Congress the achievements of the Soviet Union in the construction of Socialism and the struggle for world peace. The creation of new socialist values, the remarkable development of literature, and the participation of millions of workers and peasants in cultural activities, were vividly described by Ehrenbourg, Tolstoy, Babel, Kirshon and other Soviet delegates.

More than 250 writers, representing 38 countries, were present. The League of American Writers was represented by Waldo Frank and Michael Gold. The papers read were of an exceptionally high order, and at many points the discussion reached an unprecedented level of generalization and discernment. Before closing, the Congress set up the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WRITERS FOR THE DEFENCE OF CULTURE. *This association is directed by a Bureau of 112 members. The Bureau has at its head a central committee including André Gide, Romain Rolland, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Maxim Gorky, E. M. Forster and Aldous Huxley. The chief office of the organization is in Paris. The international Bureau will hold at least one plenary session yearly, each meeting to be in a different country.*

In publishing in this issue the papers of John Strachey, André Gide and André Malraux, we hope to stimulate interest in the proceedings at Paris and to extend the influence of that gathering on American readers.

—The Editors.

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MARXISM AND THE HERITAGE OF CULTURE

John Strachey

THIS CONFERENCE HAS BEEN CALLED because its initiators consider that our cultural heritage is in danger. The remarkable assembly of writers gathered here is evidence that on this point—though I dare say on literally nothing else—there is a wide measure of agreement among writers.

The question which must be in all our minds is—Can writers do anything about this danger? Some writers, many English writers in particular, do not think they can. I do not agree with them; but I would most cordially agree that writers can do little or nothing to defend our cultural heritage unless they come to understand the nature of the present menace to that heritage and how this menace has arisen.

There must be, surely, some explanation of why, in country after country, forces have arisen which are obviously and visibly inimical to every form of cultural activity. The appearance of this phenomenon, in State after State of Western Europe, cannot, surely, be a coincidence. Is there no hypothesis even, which fits these remarkable facts and gives us an explanation of why it is that the dominant forces in the States of Western Europe and America have, suddenly and obviously, turned against culture. These forces are, in the most pronounced cases, attempting and—let us admit—to some extent succeeding in destroying the very basis of European culture: they are burning the books, exiling their authors, contracting education, they are putting out, one by one, the lamps of reason which have been lighted in Europe during the last five hundred years.

The fact that this kind of thing is happening or is, at any rate, beginning to happen in one country after another cannot, I repeat, be coincidence or mere accident. The phenomenon is too widespread and has occurred too simultaneously over five-sixths of the world for that.

There is, as you all know, such a hypothesis. We, who accept what is usually called the Marxist analysis of human society, are able to put forward a hypothesis which accounts fully for what is happening. Hence it seems to me that before writers reject that hypothesis out of hand, they should at any rate make a serious study of it, and above all, should satisfy themselves that there is some other, and better explanation of the facts.

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Let me try to state this explanation of why the dominant forces in every capitalist state are so obviously turning against culture. We believe that this is happening because the capitalist system no longer makes sense. It has become profoundly irrational. Could anything be a more perfect epitome of this irrationality, for example, than the most widespread of all the contemporary phenomena of capitalism, namely, destitution in the midst of plenty. It we sought a text-book example of unreason, what more perfect one could we find than, for example, the recent economic activities of the American government, such as the burning of the wheat, the ploughing-in of the cotton, the slaughtering of hogs, at a time when, according to the last official figures, no less than 22,600,000 American citizens are existing in destitution upon public funds.

These are the more striking and also, I fear, the more hackneyed examples of capitalist irrationality. But in fact they are in essence no more irrational than is the familiar and universal co-existence of unemployment and destitution. What can reason make of the idea that men cannot work because their needs are unsatisfied, and that their needs are unsatisfied because they cannot work? As Frederick Engels put it many years ago in the tersest description of capitalist civilization that has ever been written, "The producers have nothing to consume, because there are no consumers."

Well, then, if these are the characteristics of present-day capitalism, what is more natural than that the representatives of such a system should make war upon every manifestation of human culture and reason? For their system simply doesn't bear thinking about. Its whole prestige, its whole hold over men's minds is endangered from the very moment that anyone thinks or writes clearly and reasonably about it. The human mind revolts against a system of this degree of irrationality; and the revolt of a man's mind is the beginning of the revolt of the whole man.

It was the semi-Fascist government of Japan which invented a new crime, the crime of thinking dangerous thoughts. It has been left to the fully Fascist government of capitalist Germany to carry this tendency to its legal conclusion. The German Nazis have realized that for capitalism *all* thoughts are dangerous thoughts. If capitalism is to be maintained it is urgently necessary that all plain, clear, logical thinking should be destroyed. Hence the Nazis' sustained attack on every form of cerebration, hence their desperate attempt to destroy the whole cultural heritage of Europe, hence their explicit propaganda against reason and in favor of blood-thinking and instinct, which are, of course, only elaborate names for not thinking at all.

Being an English writer I feel a need to point out that literature is a part of human thought and human reason. This must seem strange to

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the writers of other countries, but the English cultural heritage is so "literary," is literary in so narrow a definition of that term that the unity of human culture, the fact that economics, philosophy, science and literature are only four different expressions of the same essential human reasoning faculty is often lost sight of. This, of course, was not always so. In the England of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century the unity of culture was still preserved, but in the last fifty years or so literature has tended to float off, to detach itself from the rest of human life and thought. Thus, I believe, that for us in England it is actually necessary to make the simple point that literature *is* part of the rest of human knowledge and enlightenment and stands or falls with it.

I wish to say one thing else today. It may be that some of those present will—in part at any rate—agree with the view that capitalism is turning against the European cultural heritage. They may even agree with the explanation which I have suggested for the fact. But, they object, is not Marxism itself also an enemy of that heritage? Would not the triumph of Marxism destroy that culture just as effectively (even if by different methods) as would the triumph of Fascist capitalism? I believe that no more extraordinary mistake as to the nature of Marxism can be made, than this.

It is, of course, impossible for me to attempt to describe Marxism in a few minutes this afternoon, but it is worth pointing out that that body of theory and knowledge which we call Marxism did not fall from the skies; nor was it suddenly developed out of nothing in the minds of Marx and Engels. On the contrary, these two men were, perhaps, more thoroughly soaked in the cultural traditions of Western Europe than any other two men of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the new cultural traditions to which they gave birth would have been—as they themselves pointed out a hundred times—utterly impossible if it had not been built upon the existing body of human knowledge. In fact Marxism, or dialectical materialism, as the philosophy of Marxism is usually called, rests upon three great achievements of European culture, viz: English political economy from Petty to Ricardo, French materialism of the eighteenth century and German classical philosophy.

The very idea that Marxism is not the logical continuation of the European cultural tradition must seem bewilderingly strange to anyone who has read over even a few works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. And yet this idea is constantly being voiced not only by the hack apologists of capitalism—for whom any stick is good enough to beat the dog with—but by genuine friends of culture who have never happened to make any study of Marxism and who are, therefore, startlingly ignorant of what Marxism is really like. For example, we often hear, and I hazard the guess that

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we may hear in this conference, the view that Marxism, especially as expressed in the rising civilization of the Soviet Union, is "mechanistic," that it worships the machine, is "anti-humanistic" and the like. The Soviet writers here present will, of course, deal with the question themselves, but if I may say so, I doubt if they themselves quite realize the depth of the misconception as to the nature of Marxism, or how prevalent it is even in sympathetic circles of Western Europe. They know well the profoundly anti-mechanistic nature of Marxism. It is a commonplace with them that the main polemic of dialectical materialism is directed precisely against a mechanistic or narrowly materialistic outlook upon the world. They know this so well that I fear they may not realize the need for emphasis of the point here, that one way of stating the object of the industrialization of the Soviet Union is to say that the object of the whole process is to provide the indispensable material basis upon which the mass of the population can alone participate in cultural life, and thus develop those humanistic values which its critics actually suppose the U.S.S.R. to be neglecting.

But to return to Marxism as a system of ideas. It would be paradoxical, but I think it would be true, to say that just because Marxism stands for political and economic revolution, it is culturally conservative. Marxists are convinced that it is only by a revolutionary change in the political and economic basis of society that human culture can be conserved and, of course, developed; but that development, as Marx, Lenin, and every other Communist leader, has reiterated, must be on the basis of the existing cultural heritage.

It was only after (they persistently taught) a man had mastered that heritage that he would be able to surpass it, and add something to it. Marxism rejects literally nothing that is vital in our cultural heritage. Marx and Engels not only preached this view, they also most certainly practiced it. Their erudition was formidable. But, not only were they erudite, they cared passionately for literature in the narrower sense of that term.

Marx was a very considerable Shakespearian scholar. *Das Kapital* is studded with Shakespearian quotations, as when he compares the intangible nature of a "commodity" with Mrs. Quickly, and complains that "a man does not know how to come to her." Again, as readers of their correspondence will remember, Marx and Engels quite literally refused to have anything to do with a man because he failed to appreciate Balzac's *Pere Goriot*. Engels writes, vehemently, that there can be no possible good in such a fellow, so they had better not have any more truck with him. Incidentally, Marx's worship (for it was nothing less) of Balzac, the arch-conservative, Catholic monarchist is a good example of his breadth of appreciation. As he said, he did not care a fig for Balzac's political

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views because, in spite of them Balzac, better than anyone else, revealed and exposed the realities of nineteenth century life in capitalist France.

It would indeed be absurd for me to attempt to convert the doubtful or the hostile to the view that Marxism is the continuation of the European cultural tradition, but just conceivably I might be able to persuade them to examine the matter for themselves.

There are at last available in France and England most of the Marxian classics. Might it not be worth while for writers who are genuinely concerned about the present menace to culture to acquaint themselves with the Marxian view on this question as expressed for example in such a book as Engels' *Anti-Duhring* or in the Marx-Engels correspondence? "Yes, if people could only *read*," as Marx used irascibly to remark.

LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Andre Gide

IN CONFRONTATION WITH THAT DANGER of which we all are conscious, the danger that brings us here today, it is to the deeply individual reactions of each people and its representatives that we may look for the most useful and generally applicable lesson that there is to be learned, for the reason that it is the most profoundly and unaffectedly human one of all.

I should first like to clear up certain confusions.

The first I meet with is one which the nationalists have endeavored to create, through an identification of internationalism with a disaffection toward, a disavowal and attempted disintegration of one's own country. They have given to the word "patriot" a sense so cramped and narrow, so hostile in intent, that we are no longer able to make use of it. There are some of us, there are a great many of us, who cannot admit that a love for the land of one's birth consists above all of a hatred for other lands. As for myself, I feel that I am profoundly an internationalist, while remaining profoundly French; just as I feel that I am deeply an individualist, in giving my full consent and my help as well to the cause of Communism.

My thesis has always been this: that it is by being the most himself that each individual best serves the community. Another proposition may now be added, as an appendage or corollary to the first one: it is in a Communist society that each individual—what is most individual in him—may find the fullest and freest development; or as Malraux puts it in a

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recent preface, one that is already famous: "Communism restores to the individual his inherent fertility."

What is true of individuals is equally true of peoples. There is nothing I so much admire about the U.S.S.R. as I do the great care it takes to respect and to protect the peculiarities of each small state comprised in the great Soviet Union,—a respect for the language, manners, customs and culture peculiar to each. This flatly contradicts the reproach that is commonly hurled at Communism and the U.S.S.R., when they are accused of attempting to plane down, level and standardize all humanity throughout the enormous reaches of Russia, while merely waiting for an opportunity to do the same to the entire world.

It is as a man of letters that I speak; and I would speak here only of culture and of literature; but it is, as a matter of fact, in literature that this triumph of the general in the particular, of the human in the individual, attains its fullest realization. What could be more specifically Spanish than Cervantes, more English than Shakespeare, more Russian than Gogol, more French than Rabelais or Voltaire—and at the same time, what could be more universal, more deep-rootedly human, as I remarked more than thirty years ago? It is through a process of self-particularization that each of these great writers achieves a common and utter humanity. It is, accordingly, as a Frenchman that I speak; and I do not believe that I could do better than to examine from the French point of view the grave problem that we all are facing today.

First of all, I should like to cast a brief general glance over our literature.

I was speaking of Rabelais a moment ago. He brings into French letters an element of tumult that is not to be found after his time. I have said that he is highly representative of our country. He is still more representative of his age. Our literature immediately afterward grew calm, temperate and wise. What impresses me as being that literature's outstanding characteristic, all in all, is its tendency to detachment and self-perfection through an avoidance of the contingencies, accidents and material difficulties of life.

I am referring here, needless to say, to our so called classic literature. Authors, spectators or readers, and actors (by which I mean, the characters of novels or tragedies) are all alike free of economic hardship. To speak of the well-to-do to the well-to-do has been the man of letter's business; and if he himself does not happen to be so favored, there is no need of our knowing about it. Nor is there any need of our bothering about becoming acquainted with that poverty upon which the good fortune of the lucky ones is based. Literature, pure thought are to be sheltered from such troublesome questions as these. Racine's marvelous tragedies, for

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example, are flowers that could only bloom under glass. The individual with whom they are concerned is a leisured one, who has all the time in the world to study his passions of mind and soul, with all the time that is needed for those passions to develop in due course.

I do not mean to bring any indictment against that literature which I am discussing. No one admires more than myself the masterpieces to which it has given birth. I might even say that, since the age of Greece, art has never attained so high a point of perfection. Some one has said, those tragic kings and queens of the seventeenth century no longer hold any interest for us; but I can only pity those who are insensitive to the pure beauty of their words and deeds, being unable to appreciate the authentic quality of the passions which all that purple merely serves to clothe and shield. Nevertheless, all the actors in these tragedies are privileged beings.

A literature that is willing to consider only beings such as these, and, even where they are concerned, to look at nothing but the head and heart, is in danger of losing all solid footing. By breaking off contact with reality, with life, art speedily becomes artifice. With the exception of the Latin, which in this respect goes the classic French one better, there is no other literature—none in Europe, certainly,—that impresses me as being so bloodless, so constantly and so perilously near to the factitious as our own.

For it is always at the base, on the ground, with the people, that a literature finds new strength and sap. In this regard, it is comparable to Antaeus, who, as the wise old Greek fable has it, loses the strength and power that are his when his feet are no longer on the earth. The thing that brought a new and much needed vigor into French letters in the seventeenth century was not the influence exerted by Montesquieu and Voltaire, however great their genius may have been—no, it was the work of plebians, of commoners, of a Jean-Jacques, or Diderot.

Owing, it may be, to an excessive love of form, of outward appearance and the word, French literature finds itself unremittingly drawn toward the artificial and the factitious. So true is this, that we see the Romantic Movement combatting the artificialities of classicism with works that are even more artificial than the older ones. And thus it is, of all the great representatives of the new school, Musset, Vigny, Hugo himself, there was not a one who came from the people and who brought what might be called fresh blood.

Hugo, the truth is, was well aware of where salvation lay; whence, the tremendous effort he made to come near to the people, to speak in their name, to represent the people, an effort which so irritates those of the Right today, who see in it only a proof of Hugo's "stupidity"—where I see,

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opportunism perhaps, but in that very opportunism a deep-sighted intuition.

May it be that I am exaggerating this tendency on the part of our literature to the artificial and the factitious? I do not believe so. I find it once again in the Symbolist reaction which so closely followed the realism of Zola. And even Zola, whose worth and importance are shamefully unappreciated by a number of our critics and literary historians,—even in Zola, I discover a tendency to synthesis and abstraction which, in spite of his passion for realism, binds him so very closely to a certain romanticism of form, if not of inspiration.

No, I am not exaggerating in the least. I am amused, when I hear one of the most authoritative and representative critics of the Right undertaking the defense of civilization, in what I must admit is a notable article; I am amused when I hear him admitting the artificial aspect of our culture and, at the same time, entering upon a defense of the artificial. There is nothing like getting one's vision straight; and a statement such as his is of the sort that compels one to take a clearly defined position.

"Civilization," we read in a recent number of the *Action Française,* "civilization is a lie; it is an effort to substitute the artificial man for the natural man, the garment, the adornment, the mask, for man's native nudity."

And our critic goes on to say:

"He who will not admit this *anti-natural* effort, this splendid lie, to be civilization's reason for being, constituting its real grandeur and that which is our own,—such a one is an enemy of civilization itself."

Ah! no! I cannot believe that civilization must, necessarily, rest upon a lie. An artificial civilization of this sort, one that sets out to be factitious and which proclaims itself as such, worthy product and reflection of a mendacious social system, bears within itself the germs of death. Those literary works which it continues to spawn are moribund, as is the society behind them; and unless we are able to shake all this off, we too are dead and done for. Hothouse culture has seen its day; if the nationalists stick up for it, all the better; it only enables me to see the more clearly and to realize the more assuredly that culture's true defenders are on the other side of the fence.

But as I have said, I have no intention of attacking this culture. However artificial it may be, it has led to the production of some remarkable works. To deny the past is a vain and absurd proceeding. I would even go so far as to say that the culture which we today visualize doubtless could not have been produced straightaway, and that it no doubt was a good thing for this mendacious variety to have run its course; just as the capitalistic system, however much we may loathe it, surely had to precede that Communist society toward which we are bending our efforts.

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The point I would make is, it is not by prolonging, but by opposing this past culture that literature, culture and civilization may go on developing and expanding. The author of the article I have just quoted takes me to task, and would make of me an enemy of culture, for the reason that I am an apostle of sincerity. Our quarrel, however, is not with culture itself, but with its artificial and conventional aspects; and I say, the enemies of culture are those who serve as apologists for mendacity and—for it all goes back to that—for the lying social system under which we live.

"Between civilization and sincerity, a choice must be made," the author of the article in question concludes. Once again, no! I cannot admit that civilization is in essence insincere (and we know only too well what that means), or, if you choose to put it that way, that man can only become civilized through a process of lying. The concept of sincerity is, as I see it, an extremely important one; for it is one that I refuse to limit to the individual. I say that society itself is insincere, when it sets out to stifle the voice of the people, to take away from the people the opportunity and even the possibility of making themselves heard, when it keeps the people in such a state of subjection and degraded ignorance that they no longer so much as know what it is they would say to us, which culture would so greatly benefit from hearing.

At the beginning of my literary life, I took my stand against the nationalists of yesterday, when they declared that "Man has said everything that he has to say; all that he can do it to go on repeating himself." Is it not, I ask you, a remarkable thing that, two centuries after La Bruyère, who held that "We have come upon the scene too late,"—is it not a remarkable thing that we today are able to look about us and behold a valiant, young and fresh humanity, as it faces a future that is filled at once with danger and with promise?

But let me retrace my steps a little. Inasmuch as literature signifies communion, the question arises, With whom is it that the practitioner of literature holds communion? In certain literatures, and especially in the French, a strange phenomenon sometimes occurs, and we have a first-rate writer who, during his lifetime, finds absolutely no audience. Are we to say, then, that he is writing for himself alone? No. That communion which he is unable to achieve at once and in the realm of space, he hopes to attain in the realm of time; his audience lies scattered in the future. The result is that at first he remains a weird and esoteric figure, and his qualities, his strength go unperceived by others. I am thinking of Baudelaire, of Rimbaud, and of Stendhal, as well, who asserted that he wrote for the few, and that his real readers were not yet born. This was

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similarly the case with Nietzsche, with William Blake, with Melville—I mention only the greatest of them.

In the work of each of these men there is a powerful, living, breathing impulse to communion; but the communion is of a belated sort; from which I would draw this highly instructive conclusion, that it is not to be held against a writer, if he addresses himself at first to but a handful of readers. I was, I must confess, a bit alarmed when, at the Writers Congress in Moscow, I heard workers of all kinds and in large numbers saying to the writers: Talk about us, write about us, take us as your subject. For the function of literature is not—or at least, is *not merely*—that of a mirror; yet up to the present time, literature in the U.S.S.R. has been practically content with such a rôle. It has given us, it is true, a number of outstanding works of this sort; but it should not stop there. The thing, the chief thing it may be, is to aid that new specimen of humanity, whom we so ardently desire to see born, in his struggle to free himself of shackling falsehoods, in his efforts to shape and plan himself. So far as that goes, this was the thought which was admirably expressed at the Moscow Congress by Bukharin, Gorky himself and many others. Literature is not satisfied with imitation; its rôle is an informing one; its business is to suggest, to create.

Those great unacknowledged geniuses of whom I was speaking, whose works are today printed in enormous editions, have contributed a good deal more to that self-knowledge which it lies within man's province to achieve, and which he ought to seek, by forging within themselves an undreamed of sincerity, than they would have done had they been content with a mere portrait of man as he then was, or believed himself to be. To look for communion is well enough; but it sometimes happens that communion is not immediately to be had. In my own case (and I must beg your pardon for the persnal allusion), coming of a middle-class family, with a middle-class background, I could not but feel from the beginning of my career that everything in me which was most my own, which was most worth-while and valorous, was by way of being a direct and immediate protest against the lying customs and conventions with which I was surrounded. And so, today, in that capitalistic society in which we are still living, it seems to me all but impossible that literature should be anything other than a literature of opposition.

Communion with his own class is out of the question for the bourgeois writer; and as for communion with the people—well, I should say that it is equally impossible, so long as the people remain what they are today, so long as they are not what they might be, what they should be, what they will be, if we lend them our aid. The only thing left is to address the unknown reader, the reader to come; and the way to be sure of reaching

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him is by attaining to what is most deeply and irreducibly human in one self.

The U.S.S.R. at this moment presents an unprecedented spectacle, an unlooked for and tremendously important one, and one which, I would add, well may serve us as a model. It is, namely, that of a country in which a writer finds it possible to enter into direct communion with his readers. In place of rowing upstream as we are compelled to do, the writer has but to let himself be borne along with the current. In the reality all about him and close at hand, he may find at once inspiration, copy and an immediate echo of what he has to say; which is not without a danger of its own, inasmuch as the creation of a work of art implies the overcoming of a certain resistance.

But there will be time later to discuss these new dangers that threaten. As to the Soviet literary output, I have seen some praiseworthy productions, but none as yet satisfactorily bodying forth that new man who is in process of formation, and whom we are all anxiously awaiting. The Soviet literature is still engaged in depicting his formative struggles, his birth-throes. What I am confidently looking forward to is works of an annunciatory character, works with a mighty impulse behind them, in which the writer, stepping ahead and blazing the trail, extends to reality a beckoning invitation to follow.

What would we think of a treatise on—let us say—radium which dealt solely with the manner in which the substance is obtained? Obviously, the extraction, the production of radium is chronologically of first importance; but nevertheless, what interests me more than anything else is learning what the properties, qualities and degree of efficaciousness of the new and brilliant metal are. So with us today, the first thing we have to think about is man, the new man, how to get him; and in this tortured West of ours, we are still wide of the mark; we are still in the period of struggle. That struggle is one that we neither desire nor cherish for its own sake, but for the result it brings; we are not so much partisans as getters.

In every enduring work of art, that is to say, one that is capable of appealing to the appetites of successive generations, there is to be found a good deal more than a mere response to the momentary needs of a class or period. It goes without saying that it is a good thing to encourage the reading of such masterpieces; and the U.S.S.R., by its reprints of Pushkin and its performances of Shakespeare, better shows its real love of culture than it does by the publication of a swarm of productions which, while they may be remarkable enough in kind, and while they may exalt its triumph, are possessed, possibly, of but a passing interest.

The mistake, I feel, lies in trying to indicate too narrowly, too pre-

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cisely, just what is to be looked for in the great works of the past, the lesson that is to be learned from them. In the first place, a work has much to teach us by the simple fact that it is beautiful; and I descry a certain unfamiliarity with, a certain contempt for beauty in an over-insistence upon the lesson, in a too exclusive search for *motives,* to the neglect of *quietives.* I feel that it is a good thing to leave each mind free to interpret after its own fashion the great texts of literature; and if the individual finds in those texts a lesson that is a little different from the usual—I was about to say, the official one, I am by no means sure that he is, for that reason, in the wrong, or if he is in the wrong, that his mistake may not be of greater value than a blind acquiescence in an accepted opinion. Culture works for the freeing of the mind, not for its subjection.

None but the avowed enemies of Communism could see in it a will to standardization. The thing that we expect of it, and which the U.S.S.R., after a period of bitter struggle and a temporary restraint aimed at a more thorough-going liberation, has already begun giving us is a social state which shall permit of the greatest conceivable expansion of each individual, the bringing to light and fostering of all the individual potentialities. In this sorry West of ours, as I have said, we are as yet far from the goal; and social questions for a time seem likely to take precedence over all others —not that they are in themselves of greater interest than any others; but the state of culture is intimately bound up with the state of society, and it is a love for culture which leads us to say: So long as our society remains what it is, our first concern shall be to change it.

At the present time, all our sympathy, all our passionate longing for communion, goes out toward a downtrodden, deformed and long-suffering humanity. However, I for one cannot admit that man ceases to be interesting, when he ceases to be hungry, suffering and oppressed. I refuse to admit that he is only deserving of our sympathy when he is utterly wretched. And I would, further, that suffering might make us bigger men,—that is to say, when it does not prostrate us, that it might hammer us into metal of a sterner sort. But for all of that, I like to dream of, I cannot help longing for, a state of society in which happiness shall be the common property of all, with human beings who shall be capable of growing in stature as they grow in joy.

Translated from the French by SAMUEL PUTNAM

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THE WORK OF ART

Andre Malraux

THIS CONGRESS OF OURS HAS been held under the worst possible conditions. Through the cooperation of a few, and with almost no money. Just have a look at the press clippings on the bulletin-board at the door. From an occasional outburst of wrath, but above all, from the impressive silence, we are henceforth aware that this Congress exists. Yet, if it held no more than the possibility of giving as large an audience as possible to books which in their own countries are no longer able to find one, if it did no more than cement our union with a host of exiled comrades,—a sense of solidarity which will be found expressed in its resolutions,—this gathering would not be in vain.

But it has another meaning than that. You read yesterday the speeches of the French Fascists. It is for each of us, then, as man and man, to take his place at the post of combat. But let us not, through an absurd preoccupation with the military aspect of things, underestimate that power of thought, which today makes it possible for our Balkan comrades, banned at home, to return home whether in French or in English, for the simple reason that this Congress has taken it upon itself to have their works translated. It is in the nature of Fascism to be a nation; it is ours to be a world.

Much has been said here concerning the defense of culture; but it may be that the best thing about the Congress is the comprehension borne in upon us that the question is not to be put that way. Let me explain.

When an artist of the Middle Ages carved a crucifix, when an Egyptian sculptor hewed out a funeral-mask, they were creating what we would term fetishes or holy images; they did not think of their carvings as art objects; they would not have been able to conceive of such a thing. A crucifix stood for the Christ, a funeral-mask for the dead; and the idea of their being some day brought together in the same museum, in order that we might study their lines and masses, would have struck their makers as nothing more or less than a profanation. In a locked case in the museum of Cairo, there are a number of statuettes. They are the earliest representations of man. Up to that time, there had been but the concept, a good deal easier to grasp, of the spiritual double, who abandoned man in

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sleep, before leaving him for good in the sleep of death. As I went through the museum, I caught sight of a visitor who was taking the measurements of these carvings; and I could not but think of how dumbfounded the one who made them would have been, had he been able to foresee that his work would end up as an artistic problem,—such the outcome of that moment, some three thousand years before Christ, and somewhere in the neighborhood of the Nile, when a nameless carver of images first took it upon himself to depict the human soul.

Every work of art is created to satisfy a need, a need that is passionate enough to give it birth. Then the need withdraws from the art-work as blood from a body, and the mysterious process of transfiguration sets in. The art-work, thereupon, enters the realm of shades; and it is only our own need, our own passion which can summon it forth again. Until such a time, it is like a great, sightless statue, before which there passes a long drawn out procession of the blind. And the impulsion which shall bring one of the blind to the statue shall be sufficient to open both their eyes at once.

We have but to go back a hundred years in order to find utterly ignored any number of works which today are among the most indispensable that we possess. Two hundred years, and we shall find the radiant, withered smile of Gothic become synonymous with the grin. A work of art is an object; but it is, in addition, an encounter with time; and I am aware, needless to say, that we have made the discovery of history. Works born of love may find their way to the store-loft or to the museum, which is scarcely a happier fate. Any work is dead, the moment love has ebbed.

Nevertheless, there is a meaning to all this. Art, thought, poems, all the old dreams of mankind,—if we have need of them in order to go on living, they have need of us that they may live again. Need of our passion, our longings—*need of our will.* They are not mere sticks of furniture, standing about for an inventory after the owner's death; rather, they are like those shades in the infernos of old, eagerly awaiting the approach of the living. Whether or not we mean to do so, we create them in creating ourselves. His very impulse to create leads Ronsard to resurrect Greece; Racine, Rome; Hugo, Rabelais; Corot, Ver-Meer. There is not a single great individual creation which is not enmeshed in the centuries, which does not trail after it the slumbering grandeurs of the past. Our inheritance is not handed down; it is one to be achieved.

Writers of the West, we are engaged in a bitter struggle with that which is our own. Comrades of the Soviets, you did well to hold your Moscow Congress beneath the portraits of the great of old; but what we expect of that civilization of yours, which has safeguarded those masterpieces, through blood and famine and typhus, is something more than a

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mere show of reverence; we expect you once again to wrest from them a fresh and significant aspect.

Down underneath our common volition, a thousand differences are at play. But that volition *is;* and when we shall be no longer anything more than historical phases of our time, when all those differences shall have disappeared in the fraternal embrace of death, we would still that the spirit which, in spite of all our weaknesses and all our bickerings, has brought us together here should be the thing which in the end will work a new metamorphosis on time's wrinkled visage.

For every work of art becomes a symbol and a sign, but not always of the same thing. A work of art implies the possibility of a reincarnation. And the world of history can only lose its meaning in the contemporary will of man. It is for each of us, in his own field and through his own efforts, and for the sake of all those who are engaged in a quest of themselves, to recreate the phantom heritage which lies about us, to open the eyes of all the sightless statues, to turn hopes into will and revolts into revolutions, and to shape thereby, out of the age-old sorrows of man, a new and glowing consciousness of humankind.

Translated from the French by SAMUEL PUTNAM.

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GUILLOTINE PARTY

James T. Farrell

"JESUS, I PITY THE POOR BASTARD. Just think, tomorrow while I'm comfortably taking my afternoon siesta, well, this poor guy, he'll be in such a condition that his head won't know where his neck is," Jack Soules languidly said.

"Jack, you're ghastly," Mrs. Soules said.

They were part of a group which had been gathered together nondescriptly and as one of the accidents of travel in the semi-modern apartment of Art Reynolds, an American novelist, on the *Rue de la Glacier*. They were talking, eating sandwiches, drinking wine and coffee, yawning, waiting for dawn when they would go around the corner to witness a guillotining at the *Boulevard Arago* and the *Rue de la Santé*.

"Now if I were still on the *Times Picayune,* instead of leading my quiet and leisurely life, why I'd like to cover a story like this. Such a story is worth yards of furniture sale and department store advertising. Love crime. With true Gallic sense a *titi* from *Montmartre* saves his girl friend's soul. And how does he manage this noble achievement? He ups and slays the dame, and then says rosaries over her dead body until it stinks so that the neighbors call in the *flics*. And now he expiates the crime," said Jack Soules, his voice flowing in a drawl that was occasionally punctuated with a mid-western accent.

"It's an utterly fascinating crime. I'm going to write a story about it, and call it *The Perfect Passion,*" frail Alvin Dilling lisped, rolling amorous eyes at Chuck Smith.

"Alvin, do it, please, I know you can make an exquisite thing out of it. I have faith in you, if you can only get back to your writing," Chuck said lovingly.

"At all events, this poor unfortunate will have lived longer than the President of France. That's fate," Morton Brooks, a University of Chicago graduate studying history at the Sorbonne, said.

"Small loss," said Jacques Sorel, poet and translator, in an accent. "Small loss. The assassination of the President of

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France only lends distinction to a name which would otherwise have gained no historic embellishments. We, in France, we have plenty of political old men to spare. So, as you Americans say, what the hell!"

"Yes, but now isn't this question of oblivion and fame in history one relative to the elements of circumstance and fortuity playing dramatic roles? How do we know who will be famous, and given the most attention in the works of future historians? It's a profound subject. Now take any one of a number of cases, oh, say, well the Duke of Wellington. . . . "

Mrs. Soules interrupted Brooks to deplore a public execution.

"Soon we might all lose our heads. So what the devil!" Sorel said, ignoring the previous remarks of both Brooks and Mrs. Soules. "The politicians. These fools! Assassins! Crooks! Lice! They have nothing else to do, so they are making a nice shambles of a war for all of us. And it's all foolishness. But when these assassins make this war, then," Sorel shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of utter weariness, "but then, since I'm an officer in the reserve, I'll have to go to my post. I'll have none of the war, but I'll do my duty. Maybe everybody will be killed, or else forced to live in the shambles they are making. So what the devil! This poor fool has his head severed by *Monsieur Paris*. Another poor fool who was elected President of France, because the politicians didn't know what else to do with him, he is assassinated by a crazy Russian. And I shall be killed in a war that I will have none of." Sorel again wearily shrugged his shoulders.

"But honestly, do you think there will be another war?" Mrs. Soules asked dubiously.

"The frontier of civilization on the Vistula must be defended," Art Reynolds said, looking pointedly at Sorel.

"Reynolds, you are a fine chap with much talent. You write like a Frenchman. But you think like an American, a child. You have your sympathy for the common people. It is sentimental. It is weak. The common people!" Scorn grew in Sorel's voice. "Fools! Cattle! And you and your Russians. They are all crazy. They want to make a paradise for pigs, so that they can destroy civilization. So sooner or later we French will have to save civilization."

"You're right, Jacques. A social system that will enable all of the masses of people to share in their own productions, that

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will enable them to benefit by the results of human science and effort, a social system like that is a threat to culture and decency and civilization," Art Reynolds said.

"You know, I was reading *Ulysses* the other day," Brooks said before Sorel replied, "Stephen Daedalus says at one place, 'All history is a nightmare to me'. When you study history, you slowly grasp the profound truth of that statement. Almost every conceivable instrument of torture which one human being can devise to use in torturing another has already been used. History is a nightmare of suffering and torture."

"That's something, Mort, to put in a letter and send back to the history department of the University of Chicago. It might help them in their support of the next war," Reynolds said.

"Men are fools, except for a few noble human beings, artists and noblemen. They are pigs. Your common people! Pigs. Beasts! What do they always do? Destroy men of superior ability and talent," Sorel said acidulously.

"Sure, the poor bastards!" Reynolds said, sipping wine. "All they do is destroy virtue and talent by producing the goods of life that we can all enjoy. Yes, I know the kind of pigs they are, working in coal mines."

"I tell you, you are a sentimentalist," Sorel said, lighting a French cigarette. Why do you waste your time with this sympathy for those who deserve a whip, not sympathy?"

"They are my people," Reynolds said.

"Say do you people know who came into the library the other day while I was working?" Alvin asked, bored.

"Who, Marcel Proust?" asked Phillip Hirschmann, an American artist who had hitherto been very silent.

Alvin's face broke into a childish pout.

"But I don't believe that there'll be another war," said Mrs. Soules.

"There is one already between the Japs and China. Only the Japs have polite manners and consideration for the feelings of others. So they won't call it a war. They are just blowing the Chinks into hell-and-gone, and refusing to call it a war," Reynolds said, his mouth twisting in sarcasm.

"There has to be a war. Mussolini has bought new suits for his army. The Italians have not won a battle in five centuries, but Mussolini has new suits for his soldiers. What can they do with their new suits, if they don't march off to war in them," Sorel said, causing laughter.

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"That gives me an idea. Why not let them fight the Poles? The Poles won their last battle before John Sobieski died. And they all love Poland. They can't run their country. I don't know how they can stand to live in it. And they'd all love to die for dear old Poland. And then make it a three-cornered fight for eighth place, and toss in the Irish. They haven't won a fight since Saint Patrick booted the snakes out of Ireland, and Saint Patrick wasn't even an Irishman," Jack Soules said, and they laughed again.

"But I'm serious. Do you really think there can be another war?" said Mrs. Soules as she munched on a sandwich.

"It won't be a war. It's going to be a defense of civilization," said Reynolds with a sneer.

"There cannot be a war. Civilization cannot stand a war. So that all intelligent men must support the cause of pacifism," Morton Brooks said.

"Say, that reminds me of a good story, even if it's an old saw. The story of the elephants," said Jack Soules.

"Do tell it. It's screaming," said Chuck Smith as he arose and poured himself coffee.

"Well, a prize of five thousand dollars was offered by a philanthropist for the best treatise on the subject of the elephant. It was open to all nationalities. So an Englishman submitted his contribution, titled *Hunting the Elephant in Darkest Africa.* And a Frenchman sent in a small neat manuscript called *Les Amours Des Elephants.* A German submitted two volumes weighing a ton, called Preparation for the *Introduction to the Systematization and Study of the Sources of a History of the Elephant.* An American college professor sent in *The Elephant and Sales Resistance.* A Russian decided to submit a contribution called *The Elephant: Has He a Soul?* But he procrastinated. And he drank tea and vodka, and as the contest drew near, he talked and talked night after night, asking and pondering the question of the soul of the elephant. So he finally sent in his title page. And then a Pole turned in a treatise called *The Elephant and the Polish Question.*"

They laughed.

"I'm beginning to get jittery. Just think. At sundown, we will see a man get his head cut off," Alvin said, growing pale, and Hirschmann arose, dropped his sandwich on the table, turned livid, walked to the French windows, and stood there, still pale.

"Well let's have some more wine," said Soules, to break the

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spell of silence that had been cast over the room, and Reynolds poured wine and distributed filled glasses.

"I need this," said Mrs. Soules.

"Don't worry my lady. You won't see much. It's just like a circus, as if you would be going to the *Cirque Medrano.* The crowd will be too large to see anything, and I give you my word there is nothing much to see but people standing around like dogs looking at their own shadows, and *poules,* and pick-pockets and peddlers. Ah humanity! These fools!" Sorel said.

"But the idea is so grisly. You know tomorrow morning I was planning to read some more of Proust in the *Cathedral of Saint Germain des Pres,"* Alvin said, and they looked at him curiously, Hirschmann sneering at him from the window.

"Ah this world is crazy. It is only we French who save the human race from being ridiculous," Sorel said, and they laughed.

"What do you think of Hitler?" Mrs. Soules asked, and Sorel looked contemptuously at her.

"He's a German. I tell you, the German, he is crazy. Crazier than the Russians. Some day we French will have to erect a huge wall around Germany and Russia and keep civilized nations out of it. That fellow Hitler is crazy enough to get into power in Germany, and when he does, War." Again Jacques shrugged his shoulders. "Well the fools want to make a shambles. And I will have to do my duty and be killed."

"Why not a revolution?" said Reynolds, ashes from his cigarette dropping onto the wine-red carpet as he spoke.

"I tell you Reynolds, my dear chap, you are too talented to concern yourself with such foolishness."

"You guys can talk, but I want to say that since I went to that Russian wedding, I now got an ambition in life, and a hope to rescue myself from either newspaper work or writing detective stories," Jack Soules said. "When I go back to Louisiana, I'm going to start a church with Russian weddings for the niggers, and charge them five bucks a throw. I'll make my pile in a year and then go to the South Sea Islands, and let Jacques save civilization, and Art here fight the revolution."

"Capitalism and war will pursue you there. There's no corner in the world where it won't," said Hirschmann bitterly.

"All I can say is that I think it's barbaric, guillotining in public," Mrs. Soules said.

"Why? You cannot be so soft. Look at your own Amer-

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ican newspapers. When this Lindberg baby is kidnapped, I read that your Al Capone wants to get out of jail and help find the kidnappers. In France, do you think that could happen? Why you think we let our criminals read newspapers and turn our jails into hotels," said Jacques, arising, circling about the room.

"Since I have been reading Proust, I have been thinking of how each human being is such a complicated human organism, and to think of how much there is involved in any single human life. Just think. Each human mind is a complicated and dramatic world of its own, rich with feelings and passions and hopes. And in a war when millions are killed, millions of people are just destroyed, blotted out," Morton Brooks said.

"You are young, Brooks, and a sentimentalist. It is no tragedy when pigs chew each other to death," sneered Sorel.

"Jacques, I see we'll meet on the opposite sides of the barricades," said Reynolds laconically.

"I cannot understand you, Reynolds, giving your sympathies, wasting it on fools," said Jacques, picking up another sandwich.

"You know politics just bores me," lisped Alvin.

"Anything that disturbs my afternoon siesta is too much for me. After all, I'm a southerner from Illinois," said Jack Soules.

"Politicians are all alike," Jacques began, ignoring these last remarks. "They get the peoples' money and they have jobs. So they got to do something. They go to their desks each morning, and they have nothing to do, and nothing inside their heads. So they make laws and sign their names on papers. Fools! No nobility!"

"Oh, let's change the subject," lisped Chuck Smith, drawing approval from Alvin.

"All right, Alvin, tell us what happened at the *Cafe Flora* last night," Jack Soules said, his sarcasm softened by a mild tone of voice.

"I saw Glenway Westcott."

"Did he smile at you?" asked Reynolds, causing Alvin to pout.

"Ha," exclaimed Sorel, laughing bitterly. "I tell you before they start the next war, they should write a motion picture scenario of it, and photograph it, managing and directing it, and the murders they will perpetrate. These assassins."

"Good idea. Maybe we could get Bill Faulkner to write the scenario," said Jack Soules.

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"And Julian Green," added Chuck Smith.

"What time is it?" asked Mrs. Soules.

"Eleven o'clock," said Morton Brooks, fingering a cheap fat watch.

"I'm tempted to go home and forget about this awful execution," said Mrs. Soules.

"Only five or six hours to go, and Jacques and Art here haven't even got their barricades built," said Soules.

"I wonder how a man would feel knowing in six hours his head will be cut off," said Alvin.

"If you knew, you'd be able to state just how contemporary capitalistic civilization and its rulers should feel," said Reynolds.

"It seems to me they ought at least to do it in private," said Mrs. Soules.

"It's the mob. They like blood. Damn the people!"

"Well Sorel, some day the people will start their own damning," said Hirschmann.

"I know it. Let them. I'll fight, and they can kill me. I wash my hands of it," Sorel said.

"All I hope is that before that happens I get my Negro church going and can give the niggers some gaudy Russian weddings," said Jack Soules.

"I'm beginning to get afraid. I'm afraid to see it happen," said Mrs. Soules.

"Oh come along. It's a prelude to the future," said Reynolds.

"It's all a dirty shambles," said Sorel.

"Well, the future comes. So pick your side," said Reynolds.

They talked on, and drank wine, and yawned. And then they talked, and drank coffee, and yawned. Toward dawn they tiredly went out and walked in the chill to the *Boulevard Arago,* and joined the packed and milling crowd. They could not understand why the scaffolding was not being erected, and they looked at the excited groups of disappointed talkers, the *poules,* the caped policemen. They learned with a feeling of morbid disappointment that the victim had been pardoned, because of the fact that there was a new President of France. The crowd dispersed. The group that had talked all night went home their separate ways, as a cold gray curtain draped Paris, and the early sun began slowly to cut it like a dull knife to open a new day. The busses rumbled. The Metro started running again. The

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street cars rattled. Crowds of workers poured forth to their day's labor. Beggars awoke stiff and dirty from their sleep in the areaways of cafes and along the Seine. The sun rose over the chilled city of Paris, the Paris of rich and poor, the Paris of splendid cathedrals, the Paris of the opulent *Champs Elysees* and the *Place de la Republique.*

LETTER

We are lost we begin to think it is all a farce
we begin to wear a cynical smile that we really mean
we question the mornings and afternoons and nights
we sit in a parlor

we drink tea and wine we praise pure perfect poetry
we question our inner springs and what makes us stop and go
we halt at street corners under a yellow light
we speak of our loss

which is women which is money which is wanting to fight
which is an ideal and bread and a spinal support
something of magic something to shake enervated bones
and churn pale blood

it is time for something, surely to arise
to arise and shake this dignity off us,
to shake the air too still with stultified
ambitions, to cry out,

shaking not heaven but our own stupor
our sick pondering: lost lost we are lost,
and we are, quite, and the midnight moon
is weaving, and we

weaving prepare our clever endings,
for we really shan't emerge, shall we?
Edward and Murray and David, shall we emerge
or perish in darkness?

ROBERT HALPERIN

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OIL FOR THE GUTTERS

Nellie Coombs

BUGS BITE MORE WHEN YOU'RE not doing anything. Joe and I sat in that small car of his for three hours, trying to keep awake. The lane we were backed into wasn't very long, and there was a cop who kept shooting up and down the highway right in front of our noses. Three hours waiting for the truck to come along, and we might just as well have been in bed. But the boys said no, it might leak out what we were going to do, so we came early. We weren't taking any chances on the truck sneaking by earlier than it was scheduled.

"Hey, Joe, what time is it?" Joe grunted, beginning to snore like a bastard file drawn across a piece of tool steel. He must have been a boy scout when he was a kid. I never was, so I didn't learn how to sleep with a couple of hundred mosquitos sticking their noses into me. But then, Joe isn't as young as he used to be, and pulling and hauling on the wheel of a heavy truck for fifteen or twenty years kind of takes the starch out of you.

I started on my second pack of cigarettes. Somebody told me once the smoke would keep the bugs away. It didn't, but it was something to do. I got out of the car easy-like so as not to wake Joe, went down the lane to the road. Just in time to damn near run into the cop. He'd cut his motor and was coasting along. I ducked back into some underbrush, covered the end of my cig with my hand. Burned it.

He kept on going, so I got out of the bushes, went back to sit on the running-board. I thought of the boys back home, wondered what they were doing. Probably hanging around somewhere, thinking about what we were doing. I thought of the boss, but I didn't have to wonder what he was doing.

The boys wouldn't have minded the overtime if they had been paid for it. Sixteen hours at the wheel with no time off is a long, hard stretch, but we would have done it. Everyone of us could have used the extra money. Then we were told there wasn't to be any overtime money. The contract this job is to

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be completed by next Saturday. Wonder if the boss gets a bonus if he finishes within the time limit.

Kind of looks as though we'd kicked ourselves out of our jobs. Two hours after we walked out, over fifty fellows were at the main garage, looking for our jobs. Sometimes I think it's a waste of time to strike, but a fellow has to stand up for himself once in a while. When millworkers strike, they can picket, but how in hell are you going to picket twenty trucks all over New England?

The wind was beginning to blow. It took some of the bugs with it. The woods were black and quiet. I used to think, sometimes, when I was pounding along the hard road with the truck shaking me to pieces, it would be great to have a farm. Not that I'd expect to get rich on it, but I wouldn't have to worry about being fired, or getting hell because a worn out tire blew out, or bawled out for checking in a little late. If you're hauling around a city very long, your throat and lungs get all raw from breathing the exhaust, and you begin to wonder if there is such a thing as fresh air.

It seemed kind of too bad to do anything to hold up the finish of the bridges. They do kind of take your breath away, but I can't help thinking about the guys who were killed in the making of them. Two men were pinned between a couple of trucks until they exploded; two more lost their balance high up on the bare steel; then a diver's airline fouled, and he never breathed again. Everyone seems to expect when a large building or a bridge is built, a certain number of men will be killed. Records show they are, but you don't have to expect it.

What with the bugs gone and all, I was almost asleep when I heard something coming along the road that wasn't an Austin. I shook Joe hard and he came out of it swell. I went to the road to be sure. It was the oil.

Joe started the car, eased it forward to the edge. I hopped on the running-board and we were off. We didn't dare show our lights, so we pushed along, hoping to hell the cop would stay away. After a couple of miles, we were right behind the truck. I climbed up on mudguard, swung my legs over the headlight on to the front bumper. I took an extra turn on the radiator cap to be sure it was on tight. I was going to hang on to it, and I didn't want it coming off when we were going thirty miles an hour. That's not very fast, but try looking at the ground some day and see how quick it goes by.

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Joe shoved his car right up against the rear of the truck. I took a good grip on the radiator cap, leaned forward and with my wrench in the other hand, tried to open the valves to the outlets. It was too dark to see what I was doing, so I let go of Joe's car, found the nut with my hand. Everything was going along fine, when the truck began to roll down a hill.

We were going through a wooded stretch. Joe was doing his best but he couldn't see that he was over a yard behind the truck. We kept rolling, picking up speed all the way down. When we hit the bottom, I was almost parellel to the ground, my hands holding on to the truck, my feet hooked into the bumper of Joe's car. There was nothing to do but keep on hanging, hoping all the while. We flashed into open country, and I guess Joe saw how I was fixed, for he suddenly gave his car the gas, and I could stand up again.

The second attempt was successful. I opened all four outlets, stuck my hand under each one to be sure the oil was coming all right. The front of Joe's car was hot as hell, but I lay on it as though it were my bride. Gradually we fell away from the truck, shot up a side road and stopped.

I got off, lighted a cigarette, went back to see how the truck was making out. The state highway department was going to cuss plenty when it tried to clean that cement road.

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JOURNAL OF THE DIAMOND*

We diamonds
we are not pearls
volatile, vinegar can annihilate them
I do not fear man's teeth nor the teeth
of vitriol

. . . . . .

That evening in a little white house
the woman who wore me at her throat
her husband called her Alix the others Majesty
was nervous
as a pearl
took aromatic drops
flickered a lace handkerchief
touched the medals
and started
when her son a big pale boy had
the hiccups
The other were playing cards
Fancy what a diamond thinks of cards
They had received important letters
The friends of the nation meant to come
Everything was to be changed in the world
They would begin to walk the tightrope again
there would be hardly any rest
except for those in jewels and bodices
with images of the Virgin lying between each breast

---

* The imperial family had been executed at Ekaterinenburg under the force of popular pressure, aroused at the news that the White Guards had seiezd Tcheliabinsk and were threatening to carry away the Czar. That the bodies of the condemned might not fall into the hands of Kolchak's men and be used for relics and anti-Soviet agitation, the people decided to destroy them and to throw everything that the vitriol had not annihilated into the mines. When Kolchak became commander of the city, he had all the houses searched and the countryside ransacked in his hunt for the imperial remains. All that was found was a huge diamond, which had been thrown in a nearby mine.

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The young turnip
came up
with a hiccup
Stop it commands the Empress
. . . . . .
When they were all in the cellar
I noticed that the photographer
intended to take a group and some of them
stood aside with
a false discretion

A little more to the right
Good woman
said the leader of the platoon
Nobody looks human
I like family portraits
they're so cold
I watch with interest
the white magnesium flare
It makes me think of flames
It make me think of roses
Above all, hold your poses
Don't move Don't move

And after that they did not move
. . . . . .
I must say this is nice
this isn't an everyday treat
a fine bath of vitriol
Continuation of the photographic tactics
Around me melts the empire
for all time
with the flesh of the false martyrs
with the bones of the wolf-cubs
with the eyes of the false gods
their nails
their tongues
their hair and their blood
for all time
for all time
sceptre and shadow
for all time the black past

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and in the bath of liquid fire
alone I know myself more cold more pure
I have no fear of vitriol
I
unmounted diamond among them all
Gay as fire that rears
high above winter snow
I never burned on czarinas
as this evening in the workers' hands
the hands of those who took me, not as jewel
but as a sun to throw
a silver fish to cast back to the sea
they give me tonight to my mother, she
the carbon-hearted, the earth,
with the charred ashes of empire
in the mines
Behold me free as the stones of the fields

The red guards return
to the town
Finally I cover myself
with kingless shadows whither I go
to tell the brightness of the new days
to the monsters of the earth below.

LOUIS ARAGON

Translated by Muriel Rukeyser

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FLIGHT INTO REALITY

Betsey Foote

Dear Betty:

I HAVE NEVER BEEN SO INTIMATE with a violin before. Every morning we climb out of bed together, I and the violinist across the court, and as I reach for my shorthand book, he curves slender fingers around his pet, and another day has begun. How I envy him! I am an artist, too; I have a victrola and I play Brahms' first symphony on it, at least twice a day. But most of the time I am compelled to make mental images of curly lines and slap them down on paper meticulously so that some of these days I can venture forth to an employment agency with a neat, office-girl expression on my face. My violinist is struggling patiently after beauty. I never interrupt him in his struggles; instead, I wait till he is eating lunch, and then we enjoy a movement or two of Brahms, munching sandwiches and looking, occasionally, across the court at each other.

Today two rollicking ice men came down the narrow alley and yelled splendidly, "HICE! And HICE, apartment three C!" and I leaned out the window and yelled down at their two heads warm with sun, "Three C has enough HICE for today!"

Then it seemed so strange that I had sat here in despair all morning until they came; I sat thinking of the milk getting sticky in the bottom of my empty glass; of the strangle hold of the wires around the necks of the telephone posts outside my window; of the dry clod choking the groping roots of the stunted, half naked trees trying to put out their leaves to the smothering air; of the dismal, apologetic wail of the twelve o'clock whistle and what it meant to those who still listened for it; of my white body, which is young now, and still soft and smooth, sheathed in an invisible silken covering of tiny gold hairs; of the meaningless menace of the black cross cutting into the delicate blue sky in the back of those apartment buildings; of the lost breeze fingering hotly, idiotically, hopelessly, the dust coated leaves;

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of the stupid chirping of a sparrow, and the jerky swelling and deflating of his body as he chirped.

And then the ice men came, shouting, down the alley. Bantering, brawny fellows, leaping out of their truck, banging the tinny doors of it, lifting carelessly the pure, bluish ice in those huge metal claws; perspiring up flights of stairs numbering even to five; then a twisted, wet grin, a red palm receiving a dime or two, rapid, clumping descent, and more yelling hoarsely. "HICE!" as the truck rattles slowly down the alley.

They do this every day, and every day they make me glad, and ashamed, and puzzled. But the kind of gladness I feel is, I think, similar to theirs, which makes them throw themselves so sweepingly and vigorously into their work. They bring ice to tenements, chip a thick slice of it with rapid jabs to make it fit in the ice chest, so that those who are lucky enough to have these things can gulp down chilled milk and take a vicious delight in butter that is almost too hard to spread, and meat that is free of a rotten taint because it lay all day on the cool breast of a piece of ice.

I think, somehow, this all has a relation to what I wanted to tell you about, yesterday. I think there is a truth in it that I have known for a long time but have never felt sufficiently.

To begin with, yesterday was a torrid day. Paul came over with the makings of a cocktail or two; you know my weakness on hot days. Between the two of us, before he left we "knocked the shoulders off a pint." This put me in an extremely mystical mood, a mood, in which I was fairly treading on beautiful rainbow colored bubbles; a mood, in short, in which to go for a walk in the Fenway and muse about Nature. Mind you, I was not inebriated. No fuzzy edges to things; everything was twice as clear as usual, as though my eyes had never been focused correctly before. There was a handful of cool blue sparks in the black sky, and the moon's gleaming body lay warm in a twisted veil of white cloud drift. I walked along the naked footpath that lies intimately near the lips of Muddy River. This park, you know, is miles long, and one can walk for hours without having to recross a single patch of grass. There were ducks skimming silently on the little river, and stars melting in the water. It was ideal, you see, but when one's focus is artificially enhanced, moods are apt to come and go, and I began to feel a sense of futility. Such moods are splendid until you begin to think of yourself in relation to all you are appreciating; until

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you suddenly begin to sense that you would enjoy your newly awakened sense of beauty more if you could understand why you felt such a kinship with the grass and the river and the trees, and if you had the right to feel that kinship. And I do, Betty. Not like the Minnesota poetess who wanted to roll in fresh, green grass, but like one who knows the grass, and whom the grass knows.

But while I was walking in the Fenway I began to wonder whether or not I had the right to assume such kinship, and I thought of it as something I should settle with myself, and the grass, perhaps, too.

For I rose up from beneath the grass and my body was moulded of the stuff of grass and the body of the grass is nourished by dust of bodies like mine.

For one day I was sitting on a stone wall warm in the sun, and I went away leaving some of me in the stone wall, and some of the stone wall was in me, and the sun was in both of us.

And one night I saw a tree blossoming in the moonlight, and I thought I had known it before, and had felt it blossoming in me.

And, another night, I had a fist fight with Paul, and the thud of my fist rebounding off his warm, firm flesh, and the stinging ache in my shoulder where his fist hit me, this was all good, it was great, it was rowdy.

Then I thought of a girl in a checked gray skirt and a black velvet jacket climbing a stairway stinking with defective drains; a rickety, broken down, swaybacked stairway, reaching up, ladder-like, to a filthy skylight over a door with the number 10 in chalk on it. The girl had a bundle of papers under her arm. The door rattled under the light rapping of her fist. A chair, released, cracked like old bones. There were heavy footsteps, and a middle aged Negro woman opened the door.

"Hello," the girl says, her smile asking for a return smile; getting one.

"Hello, deah." The woman, with one palm smoothing her apron over her fleshy hip, is wondering.

"Do you read the Daily Worker?" The girl, looking frankly, questioningly, into the woman's eyes, liking her, her brown polished face, her stiff black hair stretched tautly from her brow, her thick, pink lips a little parted, a little worried, her eyes wise, sorrowful, tragic.

"No," she replies, her voice low. "But ah've heard of it;

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an 'ah know it's a wohthy papah, fightin' fo' the Scottsboro boys."

And the girl, gratefully, says, "There's an article in this issue about the Scottsboro boys. And look, here's a picture of them. There's Patterson," unfolding the paper and pointing, "And there's Norris."

"Aint it awful, the way them so'then folk hate colored people?"

The woman's work was doing laundry. Her hands were long and bony, with enormous awkward joints, as though they had been stretched out and hardened from constant scrubbing and wringing. It was hard, these days, to get work. Her husband was ailing. He only sat on the curb with his feet in the gutter and snoozed, and blew the flies off his nose.

When they talked again of the Scottsboro boys, there was a crescendo in the understanding of the woman, speaking of the whites and Negroes joining hands, speaking without labels for anything; and then, with the rising crescendo, her eyes burned strangely with an old light, and she said,

"The lawd will not let them kill the Scottsboro boys. I have faith in the lawd."

The girl, looking into those burning eyes, wanted to cry out and to curse the Jesus screamers, the exploiters of Jerusalem Slim, the opium peddlers, the preachers of the gospel—but she was still looking into those eyes, and she saw left, now, only a glimmering of the faith, and only a frustrated glimmering. She saw the woman's lips part to speak, and say nothing, and part again. For the moment they were worlds apart. Then the lips moved.

"But," the woman, said, "Ah don't believe in turnin' the othah cheek."

Then the girl, forgetting about the three cents, gave the woman a copy of the Daily Worker, promised to come over and chat with her again some evening, and went down the stairs. When she got outside, she wrote down in her mind the number of the dilapidated apartment.

All of this went through my head while walking in the Fenway that night; swiftly, it went, half thought, half imaged, half symbolic. And I knew, then, that I could never be a futilist, for at the lowest point of a futile mood, something bursts softly into flower, and I am glad if only because some word I have said has stirred the air, some blade of grass I have disturbed lifts its head now once more to the sky, straightens its bent back,

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and feels anew the green strength of it. At the bottom of despair, I become at the instigation of a thing remembered, a half forgotten incident, like the man I saw this morning at the window, stretching, grinning upwards, stretching inwardly upwards. He didn't know I was watching him, as he stood there, the window curtains blowing about him. If I am no more than a smile on the face of a lazy man, let some one see that smile!

Soon I came to an interruption in the little path, and had to go across a pavement to another part of the park, and as I was walking along a much more public walk, looking for the river again, a group of young people about sixteen or seventeen were walking along behind me, talking. I heard bits of the conversation.

"Jesus Christ," one of the girls said shrilly. "So da pansy come right up behint ya, huh?"

"Yeah, he come snakin' up to me," her boy friend replied nasally.

"So what dit ya do? What dit ya say?"

Chorus of brazen, hoodlum voices, "Yeah, Bob, tell us what ya said."

"Well, da dirty ting he tried ta kiss me!" His voice was hoarse with pleasure.

Chorus of jeers and bronx cheers: "YEAH? So WHAT? So what den? Dit ya knock him flat?"

"Naw naw, but I didn't want da guy slobberin' on me so what dit I do but slap him down. Aw, it was easy!"

"Chees, Christ," the girl whined. "I wouldn'a know *what* ta do."

"Yeah? Well, it wouldn'of happent ta you."

Chorus of jeers and cat calls. Then they turned aside and I found my path along the riverside.

Since then I like to think of them as unreal, and yet, I believe they are nearer to the truth than any caricature. They were typical of what can happen to adolescents today. They were embryonic whores and gangsters. Yes, perhaps I do exaggerate, but to me they also became symbolic, like the Negro woman, like the ice men, and the stone wall, and the grass, and the violinist who strains after beauty.

I often wonder about the music he plays. He seems to live intellectually alone, and, in his music, feeds upon his own lyrical sensitivity. Yet it is more than this; he seems to revel in orgies of mysticism. If you would call it triumph, he represents the

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triumph of successful escape from the fetters of reality. He succeeds in losing himself completely in the strivings of his soul and the utterances of symbol. Sometimes, when he repeats a phrase in order to extract the deepest meaning from it, he seems to peer into and beyond the fabric of the music like a man who sees above the ugliness of a wooden fence and up into the sky, worshipping the "clouds, the marvelous clouds!"

One day a tragic thing occurred. I was frantically scribbling shorthand and he was playing lackadaisically a fantastic little passage. He stopped suddenly and began a rapid Irish jig. At first it was insolently lilting and gay; charmingly vulgar. But then it seized hold of him and he attacked that simple Irish tune with a feverish, almost fiendish intensity all out of proportion to the character of it. It was savage and depraved, and, to me, almost unbearable. Soon it ended, and he lapsed pitifully back into his forest of "symbols watching him with friendly eyes," only now he crept sadly among them, caressing them, pleading with them.

I think we are all shams, I and the violinist and the Negro woman, and the children in the night. I think the ice men are the only real and true human beings. And the children in the park were victims of a crazy world, a world which doesn't promote sanity . . . do you think it does? I am wandering, now, but I am feeling things I want to know. Right across the room from me is a chair. In my head it's always been a chair. It might have gone on being a chair in my head forever. But now I think of it as a chair outside me; a chair, in relation to me, a human being. I want to put it outside my mind. I think this is self-realization, self-identification. I think the violinist was afraid to recognize it as a chair outside himself. Everything was in him, and therefore, was not, really, at all. But I, now, have walked to the chair, and I have touched it, and touched myself, and oh, Betty, the pleasure of it! To know we are two different things, and yet of the same substance!

But don't you see, the adolescence of striving to interpret the universe in terms of metaphysics. Was it Emerson who said the universe was mirrored in a drop of dew? If this is true, and no one understands the miracle of a dew drop, what folly to think "justification of humanity." Man is a form of matter, and I, as one instance of this form, am becoming strangely aware of myself by breaking through the shell of self.

And so it was when I sat on the stone wall warm in the

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sun. For this is matter become conscious of itself when the stone wall in my mind and the stone wall exterior to me became one.

When the grass knew me and we recognized each other.

When the river and trees and stars said, "We know you as we know each other. We are a unity, a changing unity. What is in us, moving us, is in you, it is everything, shifting, moving everything, moulding, destroying, rebuilding on its own ruins, in spiral development."

And so, to begin with, I and the world having officially endorsed each other, I think, Betty, I will go out and find my stone wall, sit down on it, and laugh and laugh with pleasure and pride over the marvelous miracle of myself.

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